

Christian Education and the Ethics of Authenticity

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Abstract

A qualitative study was undertaken to explore the concept of authenticity in Christian education. The study was situated in the context of Christian schools in Ontario. Some of these schools have experienced declining enrolment and all of these schools face the challenge of being distinctive in a secular culture. To investigate the potential of the concept of authenticity for reclaiming the vision of Christian education, interviews were conducted with 3 experienced principals of Christian schools. Data analysis yielded an emergent conceptual framework of authenticity consisting of 5 concepts: authorship, relatedness, reflection, autonomy, and excellence. Authenticity was found to be a useful tool for school analysis of both the deep structures and the surface structures within Christian schools. To offset unauthentic tendencies that can arise within these schools, this study calls for an intentional use of the lens of authenticity to expose these tendencies and revitalize core expectations. Through the narratives shared by the Christian school principals, the study also develops a picture of the role of authentic Christian education in the development of the authentic Christian person.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research project addresses the concept of authenticity as it applies to Christian education in Ontario. Authenticity in education has been discussed in the literature, and these discussions have a bearing on Christian schools in that along with their public school counterparts, Christian schools are responsible for educating children. However, Christian schools ought also to be distinguished by what has been called their distinctive Christian ethos. Unfortunately, these schools can suffer from complacency or a lack of vision, resulting in schools that are Christian in name but not necessarily in practice. This research project explored authenticity in Christian education through dialogue with experienced principals of three Christian schools in Ontario. By applying the concept to the character of Christian schools, the research contributes to the knowledge base regarding authenticity in education.

Background to the Study

Christian schools have a history in Ontario extending back more than 50 years. Growth in the number of Christian schools and student enrolment was due in large part to the immigration of “Dutch Calvinists who came to Canada after World War II” (Van Brummelen, 1993, p. 17). These immigrants brought with them a commitment to a Christian worldview that was to be active in all areas of life, especially Christian education. “Their beliefs that life is affected by one’s faith, as well as their view that no one social institution should dominate any other, meant they distrusted government control of schooling” (Van Brummelen, 1993, p. 17). Therefore, they established Christian schools. In a recent study of the history of these schools in Ontario, Guldemon (2014) demonstrates that over the past 20 years, the number of Christian schools in Ontario has plateaued and student enrolment has declined. Over the past 25

years, 18 of these schools have closed their doors. Guldemonnd concludes from his study that “if the schools are to flourish, a refurbished visionary platform has to be started now” (p. 134).

Private schools in Canada have existed as long as publicly funded schools have, and Guldemonnd (2014) demonstrates that despite the decline in the number of Christian schools, the number of private schools in Ontario continues to rise. The Auditor General’s Report (2013) observes that

parents choose to send their children to private schools for a variety of reasons, such as the school offers an educational approach that may better suit their children, the school reinforces the religious practices of the home, or they believe that private schools achieve better academic results. (p. 180)

For those who have established and supported private Christian schools, the religious harmony between home and school is a significant motivator. As an example, the Cardus Education Survey, conducted in the United States in 2010 and then in Canada in 2012, aimed to “determine the alignment between the motivations and outcomes of Christian education” (Cardus Education Survey, 2011, p. 12). Christian school graduates were shown to be “uniquely compliant, generous, outwardly-focused individuals who stabilize their communities by their uncommon commitment to their families, their churches and larger society” (Cardus Education Survey, 2011, p. 5). If Christian education is having a positive impact on families and society in general, what is the reason for the malaise that seems to be settling into the Christian school societies in Ontario? Guldemonnd suggests that the future of Christian schools depends “on how well the leaders manage the inevitable and varied changes sweeping through our society” and that this “involves directing and controlling two challenges – vision and passion” (p. 14).

Christian school societies do not operate in a vacuum and, therefore, they are not immune to the changes that occur in the culture. Sociologists mark the changes that have occurred in society over the past half of a century with terms like pluralistic, relativistic, and individualistic. Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor (1991), for example, decries the self-centered focus of individuals leading shallow lives and attributes it to an abuse of the concept of authenticity in society. In an effort to be authentic, Taylor argues, the pendulum has swung to the extreme of individualism, which “involves a centring on the self and a concomitant shutting out, or even unawareness, of the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self, be they religious, political, historical” (p. 14). Taylor describes this culture of authenticity where lives are “narrowed or flattened” (p. 14) as a “narcissistic variant” (p. 71) of an ideal of authenticity that is in need of restoration. His ideal aligns with Starratt’s (2012) contention that “the construction and enactment of personal authenticity is the most fundamental and profound ethical responsibility all human beings face” (p. 85).

Starratt (2012) establishes the link between the concept of authenticity and education when he calls attention to the focus of an ethical education, “namely that for every young person in the school, both male and female, the core moral agenda of their whole lives is to become richly, deeply human” (p. 87). While Starratt (2012) acknowledges that the need to be real, to be authentic, is every person’s *raison d’être*, he, in agreement with Taylor (1991), notes that this “always involves the intrinsic relationality of the individual and the worlds she or he live in” (p. 86). Unauthentic education loses sight of this fundamental aspect of relationality, and disconnects learners from “their relationships to the natural, social or cultural worlds” (Starratt, 2012, p. 86). Starratt (2012) proposes that leaders of education need to cultivate ethical schools where

the academic curriculum is integrated with a moral dimension that honours this relationality. Authentic education thus aims to create richer, fuller humans as they look away from themselves towards horizons of significance.

Christian schools are well-positioned to be the kind of schools that Starratt (2012) is describing. The Christian worldview that should pervade these schools embraces the idea that people are in relation to God and that this fundamental relationship directs their relationships to the natural, social, and cultural worlds. Therefore, an authentic Christian education will give rise to students who are becoming more fully human. Kinghorn (2003) demonstrates that this goal is in keeping with a fundamental Biblical teaching that “to be fully human is to be joined to Christ as an organic member of His body” (p. 128). While authenticity in education is a phenomenon that has been studied, the literature is silent on what authentic Christian education means. This becomes a particular challenge to today’s leaders of Christian schools in Ontario. This study seeks to fill this gap by developing an understanding of authentic Christian education, its hallmarks, and the obstacles that impede it. If Christian school leaders are going to manage the inevitable and varied changes of society, then their vision and passion must be focused upon authentic Christian education.

Problem Context

Education is an enterprise beset with challenges. There are the pressures to teach the curriculum, assess fairly, promote students, maintain high marks, and prepare students to make a positive contribution to society. Schools, as educational organizations, are also beset with a variety of stakeholders exerting power on those for whom they are responsible. In the midst of these pressure points, and through the hurried and harried pace of the school day, students can feel like automatons, teachers can feel

ignored by principals, and principals can feel trapped in the bureaucracy of the larger education system. Christian schools face the concomitant challenge of offering a distinctively Christian education. Additionally, independent private schools in Ontario depend entirely on the financial support of the school's community. While the first-generation immigrants saw the support of these schools as a priority, Guldemon (2014) demonstrates that "a loss of commitment to the old vision/tradition" is one of the "most frequent reasons given for the stagnation" (p. 104) of Christian schools. Moreover, Christian schools are also increasingly feeling the pressures of being religious schools in the midst of a growing secular society.

As Christian educators face these challenges, what is not known is whether the ethic of authenticity can help to reinvigorate a vision and passion for Christian education. There is some indication that the challenges can begin to be addressed with a clearer understanding of the impact that the ethic of authenticity can have on schools. Mitchell and Sackney (2011), for example, have observed high-capacity schools where a commitment to authentic education has inspired administrators, teachers, and even students. In such schools, (a) principals inspire the teachers to teach authentically and to grow professionally, (b) teachers are motivated by the need to create meaningful learning experiences for their students, and (c) students become committed to the schools and take ownership for the life of the school.

This research project addresses the unknown impact of the ethic of authenticity on Christian education by creating a dialogue around a subject that has not received attention in the literature. What is authentic Christian education? The answer to this question is in and of itself a fluid answer. Each Christian school faces unique challenges from within, including the battle against the malaise of unauthentic Christian education. But these

schools also face challenges from without, especially in a growing secular culture. Therefore, a clear vision of what authentic Christian education means to each school could form a basis for an apologetic for Christian schools in today's culture.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to explore the concept of authenticity in Christian education. The empirical questions for this research project have been developed using the conceptual tools drawn from the conceptual framework: field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital.

Field:	What constitutes authentic Christian education?
Habitus:	What are the pillars of authentic Christian education?
Symbolic power:	How do school leaders foster authentic Christian education?
Cultural capital:	How does authentic Christian education equip students for their role within their social groups and society at large?

Conceptual Framework

In her work exploring religion and education in Christian academies in England, Green (2012b) borrows a conceptual framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), a French sociologist, in order to “make visible the complex relationships between worldview assumptions, institutional structures and power in a social space” (p. 11). Green (2012a) has demonstrated that other researchers have also used Bourdieu's conceptual tools to analyze Christian education. Therefore, this research project has been constructed around the same four conceptual tools: field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. Green (2012a) defines field as the “dimensions of the social space” whereas habitus is “the deeply rooted dispositions and assumptions held by those who occupy the field” (p. 396). The remaining two conceptual tools are linked in that those

who accumulate cultural capital, “the belief that things like cultural tastes, art, music, etc., are not neutral pursuits but are themselves forms of economic capital” (Green, 2012b, p. 11), in turn gain symbolic power, which is exercised “to validate and control the accumulation of cultural capital within the field” (Green, 2012b, p. 12).

Rationale

A research project that explores authenticity in Christian education stands to benefit Christian schools and their societies. There are a number of stakeholders within these societies, from those who lead to those who support the school and those whom the school seeks to serve. As with all other schools, Christian schools also can benefit the broader society with graduates who participate positively in their communities as citizens. Therefore, if this project can contribute to the strengthening of Christian schools today, a number of stakeholder groups stand to gain from the proposed research.

Leadership within private Christian schools in Ontario consists of a board of directors elected by the membership of the school society. The directors are volunteers, members of the school society who are elected to serve for a term of 3 or 4 years. The board of directors is elected to represent the members of the school society, and they carry out the responsibility to “direct and protect” (Brown, 2006, p. 6) the vision of authentic Christian education. As guardians of this vision, the directors would be well-served by knowing what constitutes authentic Christian education. Moreover, these directors also need to know how to detect when their schools are slipping into unauthentic practices, and they need to be able to stand firm when authentic Christian education is challenged. One of their most significant contributions, applying vision to practice, is in the hiring of teachers committed to an authentic Christian education. This

research project will identify some of the pillars of authentic Christian education, and these tools can help to equip directors to hold fast to a clear vision.

The principal is hired by the board of directors to implement the policies of the board and to be responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the school. In doing so, the principal must also ensure that the vision of authentic Christian education is not forgotten in the hustle and bustle of school activities. As the principal teacher, it is incumbent upon her or him to model and to inspire others to be authentic Christian teachers. By exploring how teachers and principals foster authentic Christian education, this research project will uncover systems that can strengthen authentic education while at the same time exposing ways in which unauthentic education can weaken these efforts.

As Starratt (2012) suggests, authentic student learning is much more than simply academic in nature. Our students are growing morally, becoming more fully human. Authentic Christian education benefits individual students by helping them to become fuller, deeper individuals. As these students leave their schools and take up their responsibilities in society, they can be confident that they have been equipped to continue to grow and contribute positively within society. If this research project can contribute to the strengthening of Christian schools by renewing a vision for authentic Christian education, then the students who leave these schools will have gained cultural capital that will be a blessing to them.

Organization of the Document

This research project has been introduced by setting the stage for a study of authenticity in Christian education. The background of the study described the context in which Christian education exists today as well as providing a brief overview of the concept of authenticity and authentic education. The unknown impact of the application

of authenticity to Christian education was developed within the problem context. The purpose of the study delineates a number of empirical questions that are tied to four conceptual tools: field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. Within the rationale, those who stand to gain from the study are identified along with a brief description of how this study will benefit them.

Chapter Two presents a description and critical analysis of the existing literature related to authenticity and authentic education. The literature review has been structured around the four conceptual tools used to frame the study. The literature associated with the field examines the cultural context of Christian schools today, especially as it pertains to authenticity. The habitus describes the underlying assumptions or deep structures that shape school culture. This section examines the literature that looks at secular and religious worldviews as well as organizational paradigms. Symbolic power refers particularly to those in a position to lead a Christian school. Together with cultural capital, these sections examine the literature's description of how power is used to manifest the habitus and shape the accumulation of intangible assets by students.

Chapter Three positions the methodology for this study within the broad field of qualitative research. Site and participant selection outlines the purposeful sampling approach used to invite three Christian school principals to participate in this study. Data collection describes the type of interview used along with the methods used to ensure the reliability of the data. Data analysis outlines the inductive method of distilling themes from the transcribed interviews. The chapter ends by briefly considering the social location of the researcher and outlining the steps taken to ensure that ethical guidelines were followed.

Chapter Four presents the findings that emerged from data analysis. The chapter is organized into two parts with each part consisting of three themes. The first part, comprehending authenticity, presents the findings associated with the participants' perspectives on authenticity, authentic Christian, and authentic Christian education. The second part of the chapter, cultivating a Christian school, presents the participants' ideas of what is needed to ensure that authentic Christian education lives within the school. It also describes how the participants felt that students gain from an authentic Christian education.

Chapter Five discusses the contributions and implications arising from the study. Following a brief summary of the study, this chapter provides a critical reflection of how this investigation into authenticity and Christian education contributes to the knowledge field. The discussion interacts with what other authors have said by showing which knowledge claims are in harmony and which are in counterpoint to previous claims in the literature. The implications of this study are described under three headings: implications for practice, implications for theory, and implications for further research. The chapter ends with a final word to draw the report to a close.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on authenticity in education. While the literature does not include any explicit discussion around authenticity in Christian education, it does contain relevant studies of Christian schools. The review draws on Green's (2012a) use of Bourdieu's conceptual tools in framing studies of Christian schools. To that end, this literature review will be constructed around the four conceptual tools of field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital.

Field

In her justification for using Bourdieu's conceptual tools, Green (2012b) asserts that "Bourdieu's social analysis assumes that being situated in culture regulates our assumptions, relationships, and values and reproduces them in our social practice" (p. 11). The idea of "being situated in culture" is what Bourdieu meant by the concept of *field*. For the purpose of this research, the field is defined as authentic Christian education in Ontario. While Christian schools in Ontario are independent from the publicly funded school system, they are not isolated from today's culture. Christian schools are situated within and influenced by a cultural milieu that is quite different from when they first began 50 years ago. Therefore, the concept of field allows an examination of what the literature says about the challenge of being authentic in a culture that is, according to Taylor (1991), largely unauthentic.

The literature describes some common understandings about authenticity, but also suggests that much of modern-day society could be labeled as unauthentic. In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, for example, Taylor (1991) laments that much of what passes as authenticity in today's culture falls far short of the ideal. Taylor describes authenticity as a moral ideal of the self, "a picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be" (p.

16). Nosek (2012) similarly suggests that authenticity “elicits some association with a sense of genuineness” and “when applied to persons, one imagines a self who is true to some ‘essence’ within or in touch with some inner truthfulness” (p. 829). It is this emphasis on the inner self that Taylor believes has caused the pendulum of authenticity to swing to the extreme of individualism:

Everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own form of self-fulfillment. (p. 14)

Taylor identifies this modern-day paradigm as the “individualism of self-fulfillment” (p. 14), which can be characterized as a navel-gazing approach to life.

The literature suggests that extreme individualism is rooted in cultural influences that have slowly been shifting for some time. Surveying cultural shifts over the last 2 centuries, Gergen (2000) points to the explosion in technology and transportation as a leading cause in the creation of a fragile view of the self. Gergen argues that the 19th century was marked by a romanticist perspective, where people were assumed to “possess core identities locked away in the inner depths” (p. 176). These core identities included “personal depth: passion, soul, creativity and moral fiber” (p. 6). By contrast, the modernist perspective of the 20th century was characterized by a “robust commitment to an objective and knowable world and to the promise of truth about this world” (p. 83). From this perspective, characteristics of the self are rooted “in our ability to reason” (, with the assumption that people are “predictable, honest and sincere” (p. 6). Gergen demonstrates that the advent of technology exposed people “to a multiplicity of voices” (p. 207), thus ushering in the postmodern era. According to Gergen, the postmodern self is tossed to and fro. Whether emerging from a deeply felt value or one’s own reasoned

perspective, “pluralism undermines the concept of truth, . . . creates a consciousness of self-construction, and kindles doubt in any form of ‘internal essences’ or resources” (Gergen, 2000, p. 207). This view of the self as one that is always being reconstructed to fit a given situation leads to a “sense of manipulation” whereby “one willingly though shamefully forsakes the path of authenticity” (Gergen, 2000, p. 150).

Dueck (2011) also speaks of the “various historical currents that have flown into the present ‘river’ of Western social and religious life” with “our unique conception of self” (p. 6) being but one of the tributaries. Beginning with Plato’s philosophical priority given to reflection and reason, and Augustine’s view of God as the “inner ground of our capacities of thought and perception” (p. 8), Dueck argues that it was Descartes who turned away from external moral sources towards “the inner workings of the human mind” (p. 9). Dueck concludes that the “uniquely modern predicament is that of a self which is spatially conceived as ‘inward’ but cut loose from (its) philosophical and theological moorings” (p. 11). The result is a society of individuals where “loyalty to self binds us together in solitude” (Dueck, 2011, p. 14). Taylor (1991) calls this “social atomism” (p. 58), a watered down version of authenticity whereby self-fulfillment takes precedence over “the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism” (p. 58).

Bloom (1987) illustrates this radical anthropocentrism with the anecdote of a conversation with a taxi driver recently released from prison who spoke of undergoing Gestalt therapy in order to discover himself. “A generation ago he would have found God and learned to despise himself as a sinner” (Bloom, 1987, p. 147). Bloom, a university professor, contrasts the students whom he taught at the beginning of his career

with those taught at the end of his career. He describes the latter cohort as having become narrower and flatter:

Narrower because they lack what is most necessary, a real basis for discontent with the present and awareness that there are alternatives to it. They are both more contented with what is and despairing of ever escaping it. The longing for the beyond has been attenuated. Flatter, because without interpretation of things, without the poetry or the imagination's activity, their souls are like mirrors, not of nature, but of what is around. (p. 61)

Bloom concludes that "there is less soil in which university teaching can take root" (p. 61).

A generation later, Côté and Allahar (2007) examined the crisis facing universities and the concomitant challenges facing secondary schools. They point to a cultural trend that accentuates individualism, which they describe as "the cult of self-esteem" (p. 69) whereby students are told throughout their primary and secondary schooling that their work is great and deserves a gold star even when it does not. Tracking the concern over self-esteem into tertiary education, Côté and Allahar lament that whereas universities had once been "sanctuaries of truth" (p. 123), they have now become "credential marts" (p. 66), a "means to an end, rather than an end in itself" (p. 67). Rather than being pulled by the allure of learning, students are being pushed by the need to earn a credential. This emphasis is fueled by governments that want to boast about the success of their education system and a societal expectation that a degree is necessary for securing a job. Therefore, high school teachers are under pressure to pass students and give higher grades, where no one is left behind and no one can fail. These

examples from the field of education are evidence of unauthentic tendencies present in culture today.

Taylor (1991) declares that authenticity “supposes demands that are beyond the self” (p. 41). As relational beings, he says, we find our fulfillment in dialogue. This dialogue may be with other people, past or present, with God, or more generally “between the knower and the known” (Starratt, 2012, p. 111). As Taylor says:

Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. (p. 40)

Losing sight of “the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self, be they religious, political, historical” produces a person who is “narrowed or flattened” (Taylor, 1991, p. 14). Lifting our eyes off ourselves we begin to see ourselves in relation to “horizons of significance” (Taylor, 1991, p. 38) and, consequently, become richer and fuller human beings.

This ideal of authenticity has been captured by authors writing about authentic education, recognizing that each day at school is an opportunity for children to discover a bit more about who they are in relation to the worlds around them. Starratt (2007) defines authentic learning as: “a learning that enables learners to encounter the meanings embedded in the curriculum about the natural, social and cultural worlds *they inhabit*, and, at the same time, *find themselves* in and through those very encounters” (p. 165). In a similar manner, Palmer (2007) states that a subject-centered classroom “honors one of the most vital needs our students have: to be introduced to a world larger than their own experience and egos, a world that expands their personal boundaries and enlarges

their sense of community” (p. 122). In their comparative review of the literature, Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne, and Knottenbelt (2007) state that “‘authenticity in teaching’ has been recognized as an important yet under-researched phenomenon” (p. 22). The authors note that the literature discusses features of authenticity of teaching, such as “being genuine, becoming more self-aware ... and so forth” (p. 40), but that “for authenticity to be meaningful it needs to be sought in relation to issues that *matter crucially*” (p. 41).

What matters crucially in Christian education? Grace’s (2004) scrutiny of the literature relating to education shows that “major studies proceed as if the existence of religion and of faith-based schooling systems is marginal to the central questions being investigated” (p. 47). While explicit studies into authenticity in Christian education are not evident, studies of Christian education do reveal some features related to authenticity. In her study of Christian schools in England, for example, Green (2012b) observed that biblical teaching was restricted to Bible class and assemblies and was not present in the academic studies throughout the day. Green (2012b) concluded that the students were getting the message “that the Bible wasn’t relevant to the wider subject curriculum” and that “for the majority of students it was thus marginal to their own cultural practice” (p. 18). This separation of biblical teachings from other areas of study illustrates what can happen when teaching separates the academic curriculum from what matters crucially to the purpose of Christian schools. Thus, the challenges to authenticity in Christian education begin within.

Because the field of authentic Christian education intersects with the broader social field, the very nature of Christian schools can be threatened. On the positive side, private schools in Ontario receive no funding from the government and, therefore, face

little intervention by the government. However, private secondary school graduates can earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma only if the school provides evidence that it teaches the curriculum published by the Ministry of Education. The Christian secondary schools are inspected biannually but are also allowed the freedom to teach the academic curriculum within a Christian habitus. Recently, The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (2013) observed that “Ontario has one of the least regulated private-school sectors in Canada” and that “the Ministry provides very little oversight to ensure that private-school students receive satisfactory instruction” (p. 9). The Ministry of Education was quick to respond that these schools have such freedom because, “unlike those in many other provinces, (these schools) receive no public funding” and that “the *Education Act* does not provide the Ministry with oversight and monitoring responsibilities with respect to the day-to-day operations of private schools” (The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2013, p. 184). This discussion demonstrates that, for now, the law in Ontario affords Christian schools the opportunity to be authentic Christian schools.

A recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)* (2015) has given Christian school supporters reason to believe that authentic Christian education will continue to be a protected right. The Quebec Ministry of Education “introduced a new curriculum called Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) which became mandatory for all grades (except grade 9) in all public, private and even home schools” (Schutten, 2014) and that must be taught from a “secular perspective” (Loyola High School, 2009). Loyola High School, petitioning as a private school, asked the Minister for an exemption but was refused. A Quebec Superior judge quashed the Minister’s decision (*Loyola High School v. Courchesne*, 2010), but the

Quebec Court of appeal overturned the lower court's decision (*Quebec (Procureur general) c. Loyola High School*, 2012). Loyola appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada to ascertain whether the Ministry of Education has the legal right or duty to mandate a particular curriculum taught from a secular perspective. Since Loyola High School is a private religious school, the decision in this case had implications for hundreds of such schools across the country. On Thursday, March 19, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada (*Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)* (2015)) ruled in favour of Loyola and allowed the appeal. It is instructive to note paragraph 64:

It also interferes with the rights of parents to transmit the Catholic faith to their children, not because it requires neutral discussion of other faiths and ethical systems, but it prevents a Catholic discussion of Catholicism. This ignores the fact that an essential ingredient of the vitality of a religious community is the ability of its members to pass on their beliefs to their children, whether through instruction in the home, or participation in communal institutions.

The implication for Christian schools in Ontario is that in its decision, the Court has recognized Christian teaching as an essential ingredient to authentic Christian education.

Habitus

The concept of habitus addresses the underlying assumptions or worldview that shape school culture and inform professional and administrative practice. Like other schools, Christian schools are made up of people working not only within the confines of physical space but also within a social structure. This social structure involves a certain amount of bureaucracy, where power is exercised, policies are implemented, and politics occurs. Capra (2002) describes the dual nature of human organizations:

On the one hand, they are social institutions designed for specific purposes, such as making money for their shareholders, managing the distribution of political power, transmitting knowledge, or spreading religious faith. At the same time, organizations are communities of people who interact with one another to build relationships, help each other, and make their daily activities meaningful at a personal level. (p. 99)

Within the literature, two other dualities become evident in describing the habitus of Christian schools. The first duality involves secular and religious worldviews, and the second duality is related to the managed system and living system organizational paradigms.

With respect to secular and religious worldviews, Green (2012b) points out that “a Christian organizational framework is not innately present merely because a school carries out a Christian educational purpose” (p. 13). She observes that often secular policies and assumptions about the aims of education, rather than distinctly Christian ones, anchor the organizational framework. In his call for more serious consideration of the role of religion in the sociology of education, Grace (2004) distinguishes between the “deep structures of religious cultures, doctrines and practices” and the “surface structures of educational and sociological phenomena” (p. 51). In doing so, Grace draws attention to the fact that studies in the sociology of education often ignore the deep structures of religion and the impact of religion on education. Rather, these studies have “operated within a ‘secularization of consciousness’ paradigm which has limited both the depth and scope of its intellectual enquiries” (Grace, 2004, p. 48).

Grace (2004) laments that “this lacuna of the religions is difficult to understand” (p. 48). However, the blame does not have to be placed only on the shoulders of secular

sociological writers. Blamires (1963), in his seminal work on Christian thinking, diagnoses the problem as a capitulation of the Christian mind to secular thinking. He argues that Christians have become so accustomed to the use of secular language that they “have no vocabulary to match the complexities of contemporary political, social and industrial life” (p. 27). Christian concepts such as God’s providence and spiritual destiny are replaced with secular concepts of productivity or “assembly-line psychology” (Blamires, 1963, p. 38). The Christian view of man, which is oriented supernaturally in relation to God, is replaced by a secular view of man that is temporal and where “experience embraces all that is and that ever will be” (Blamires, 1963, p. 73). This line of reasoning implies that if Christian schools are going to be authentic in their teaching, then leaders will need to bring Christian thinking and language to bear upon the academic curriculum.

In her interviews with school sponsors and senior staffs of Christian schools in England, Green (2012a) observed that a theological worldview “was functioning as a legitimate discourse” and that this discourse was also evident in the “policy documents and observations of meetings and assemblies conducted by senior staff” (p. 398). Green (2012a) describes the religious habitus of these schools in “theological terms as reformed or conservative Protestant Christian,” which is “characterized by high view of the authority of the Bible, a belief in the physical death of Jesus, personal conversion and an imperative to teach and proclaim the gospel or ‘good news’ about Jesus to the world” (p. 398). The surface structure of respect for authority also demonstrated the deeper structures of the religious habitus. For example, discipline and personal accountability were underpinned by two core beliefs within the religious habitus:

First, all human beings are made in the image of God and should be treated with respect and encouraged to fulfil their potential; and second, sin is a real human condition from which people must be forgiven but from which they must also repent and receive correction from those in authority. (Green, 2012a, p. 400)

It is evident from these observations that the religious habitus does come to expression within the life of these Christian schools. Yet, Green's (2012a) study also concluded that the religious habitus "was not widely reproduced in the culture of students," and this gap was attributed to "the structural separation of Christian Bible teaching from the secular subject curriculum" (p. 397). The structural separation of Christian teaching from the academic curriculum serves to illustrate what unauthentic Christian education is.

The literature reveals one final aspect of the secular and religious worldview duality, which has to do with our desires as human beings. Whereas the Christian should "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33,NKJV), Blamires (1963) laments that:

comparatively intelligent men are reducing fellow-human beings, children of God, called to be inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven, to the status of mindless creatures scrabbling furiously after bundles of coils and cog-wheels packaged in chromium plate, their appetites stimulated and whetted by the lure of explicit and implicit advertisement in all the publicity devices of the day. (p. 162)

Writing almost a half century later, Smith (2009) picks up on the same theme. He believes that the marketing industry has "rightly discerned that we are embodied, desiring creatures whose being-in-the-world is governed by the imagination" (p. 76). Smith develops a thesis whereby the "cognitive-centric picture associated with worldview talk" is replaced by an affective-centric focus associated with the "social imaginary" (p. 65). Smith borrows this term from Charles Taylor's (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries* as a

way of recognizing that before we think about something, or develop a theory, our affective domain has already been engaged. Applying this to Christian education, Smith challenges what could be called the Christian perspective approach to Christian education:

Could it be that learning a Christian perspective doesn't actually touch my desire, and that while I may be able to *think* about the world from a Christian perspective, at the end of the day I *love* not the kingdom of God but rather the kingdom of the market? (p. 218)

Indeed, this cognitive approach may not be enough. In one interview during her study of Christian schools, Green (2012a) records a student who says, "Yeah, like I know what I don't believe" (p. 29). The student was cognitively aware of the religious habitus of the school, but her affective domain remained untouched. Although Smith does not flesh out what this affective approach would look like for Christian schools, it seems that an authentic Christian education needs to be more than a cognitive approach of teaching from a Christian perspective.

Turning to the duality of managed and living systems paradigms of organization, Blamires (1963) observed that one of the consequences of a person's devotion to the material world is to develop within them a mechanistic approach to thinking that impacts every area of life. The net result is that a person is treated "not as a thinking, choosing, creature, but as a cog in a piece of machinery" (p. Blamires, 1963, 165). Blamires applies this lesson to the organizational approach to running a school system.

The mechanistic mind conceives of the school as a mechanism without an existential centre: it has lost the concept of the school as an institution. The antithesis between an institution and a mechanism is an important one. An

institution is a fellowship of persons united by community of purpose. A mechanism is an assembly of parts linked by interrelatedness of function. (p. 166)

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) equate the habitus of organizations with “deep structures” that are “the tacit beliefs, values, and assumptions that underpin the people’s experiences” and the corresponding “surface structures” that are “the observable rules, policies, procedures, and processes that define and contain organizational activity” (p. 21). Within a managed system habitus, principles that govern the operation of machines are applied to management of people. “This economy required predictable work systems and an efficient and compliant work force, and workplaces needed to be organized so as to elicit the necessary level of predictability, efficiency, and compliance” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011, p. 23). As Blamires contends, schools are often part of a larger organizational system that is predicated on the managed system habitus. Within this habitus, efficiency and productivity become goals that override other needs such as the moral obligations that come with teaching.

By contrast, the living system paradigm is an attempt to deal with the reality that organizations are nothing apart from the moral beings who make them. Sergiovanni (1992) observes that a moral sense of duty is a strong motivator for people within an organization. Wheatley (2007) echoes this sentiment when she highlights that “humans have a great need for relationships” and will come together when they “share a similar sense of what is important” (p. 103). This network of individuals responds to feedback and makes appropriate changes. Moreover, this group of individuals possesses a variety of skills and talents that can be used for the good of the whole. Within a living system paradigm, change occurs within organizations when the people are compelled by disturbances rather than controlled by demands. Examining high-capacity schools,

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) observe that the organizational habitus of such schools is aligned with the characteristics of living systems: “With deep, authentic learning as the central purpose of schools, educators are invited to build systems that respect and reflect life” (p. 34). The living system habitus is predicated on the ethic of authenticity, which recognizes the moral nature of organizations. Authentic learning takes place in schools that value the students and teachers as moral beings and that honour the human need for relationship both with other people and between the knower and the known.

In addition to the relational nature of authenticity in education, the literature also features reflection as a pathway to authentic lifelong learning. Mitchell and Sackney (2009) describe the learning community of high-capacity schools where “teachers had engendered habits of inquiry, reflection, and lifelong learning” (p. 52) in a concerted effort to bring the greatest benefit to the students. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) state that “reflection is currently a key concept in teacher education” (p. 47) and promote core reflection particularly in teacher training. By examining what they believe the ideal situation is and what the limiting factors are, student teachers are taught to look past their behaviour to the core values and sense of calling that inspires them. In describing authenticity in teaching and leadership, Wright (2013) states that “critical reflection is important to becoming a better teacher” (p. 37) and that “authentic leaders must base their decisions on their core values” (p. 41). By creating “a web of relationships between the teacher, the subject, and the students” (p. 41), these teacher leaders inspire students to “create their own web of relationship” and thus “help inspire lifelong learning” (Wright, 2013, p. 42). According to Zhao and Biesta (2012), lifelong learning involves a moral dimension in which the self dialogues in relationship. The authors contrast “Anthony

Giddens' idea of the reflexive project of the self' with Charles Taylor's ideas "on self and identity" (p. 332). Referring to the latter author's view, Zhao and Biesta observe:

His notion of the "dialogical self" demonstrates how we make sense of ourselves in intersubjective relationships. The "direction" of the self in relation to certain moral goods suggests a process of self-cultivation over one's lifetime and thus suggests a different role for processes of learning that might support the formation of self. (p.347)

The living system habitus nurtures the development of the self in relationship to others through reflection and lifelong learning.

Symbolic Power

An organization's habitus becomes most visible upon examining the exercise of power by the leaders of the organization. The concept of symbolic power "is used to track the exercise of power within an institution and explores how certain practices are recognized and legitimated to validate and control the accumulation of cultural capital within the field" (Green, 2012b, p. 13). Capra (2002), for example, notes that "Mechanistically oriented managers tend to hold on to the belief that they can control the organization" (p. 112). If the managed system paradigm is the predominant habitus, then leaders will exercise their power in the management and control of people. Capra continues, "A machine can be controlled; a living system, according to the systemic understanding of life, can only be disturbed" (p. 112). Leaders who embrace the living system approach exercise their power in service to and with the people of the organization. Within private Christian schools, the most symbolically powerful people are the principal and the board of directors. For the board, their power is seen in the development and enforcement of policy, such as in hiring and admissions procedures.

The principal's power is evident in his or her influence over the board and in the day-to-day interactions with teachers and students.

Green's (2012a) study of Christian schools in England demonstrated that the religious habitus, "described in theological terms as reformed or conservative Protestant Christian" (p. 398), was clearly evident in the discourse of the senior staff and sponsoring foundation. In these schools, staff were not required to belong to a religious denomination to work at the school; however, those who shared the religious habitus of the senior staff and sponsor found themselves at the top of a "theological hierarchy within the staffroom ranging from conservative Protestant Christian to other denominations to non-Christian" (p. 399). This example of leaders bringing their power to bear on the life of the school illustrates that the exercise of power can have a positive or negative effect. In his examination of the growth and decline of private Christian schools in Ontario, Guldemon (2014) concludes that "school failure is the result of systematic leadership problems" specifically "at the board level" (p. 26).

The ontological perspective of school leaders shapes the organizational structures and processes within a school. For example, a principal can use power in two ways: as power *over* and as power *to*. Sergiovanni (1992) explains the distinction:

Power *over* emphasizes controlling what people do, when they do it, and how they do it. Power *to* views power as a source of energy for achieving shared goals and purposes. Indeed, when empowerment is successfully practiced, administrators exchange power *over* for power *to*. Power *over* is rule-bound, but power *to* is goal bound. Only those with hierarchically authorized authority can practice power *over*; anyone who is committed to shared goals and purposes can practice power *to*. (p. 133)

Kumar and Mitchell (2004) demonstrate that within a managed system, exercising power *over* gives rise to three managerial strategies: denial of proximity, effacement of face, and reduction to traits. By way of explanation, within a school setting, a principal who stays in his office (a) distances himself from the teachers (denial of proximity), (b) loses sight of who a teacher is as a person (effacement of face), and (c) reduces teachers to their category (reduction to traits). The net effect is to dehumanize the people of the organization, creating “automatons that carry out stipulated tasks” (Kumar & Mitchell, 2004, p. 134).

Power has been entrusted to school leaders who can use that energy to empower others rather than to gain control. Loehr and Schwartz (as cited in Gu & Day, 2011) write that leaders “are the stewards of organizational energy; they inspire or demoralize others, first by how effectively they manage their own energy and next by how well they manage, focus and renew the collective energy of those they lead” (p. 5). Within a living system paradigm, “people are foregrounded in the ruling relations of schools” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2013, p. 3). In their study of high-capacity schools, Mitchell and Sackney (2013) sought to “track how school leaders, including administrators and teacher leaders, built capacity for authentic teaching and learning” (p. 4). They distilled four common features associated with the leadership of these schools: (a) leadership that is willing to engage events and concerns, (b) leadership that is naturally collaborative, (c) leadership that focuses discussions on learning and teaching, and (d) leadership that is selfless. In his description of servant leadership, Greenleaf (2002) captures these qualities of selfless leadership when he observes that “the great leader is seen as a servant first and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (p. 21). The servant leader is an authentic leader, concerned for people, for the public good, and for the content rather than just the process.

School leaders who empower and renew the collective energy of those they lead foster a community mentality within the school. In communities, “the connection of people to purpose and the connections among people are not based on contracts but commitments” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 4). Within the living systems paradigm, these purposeful networks of people have been defined as “communities of practice” (Capra, 2002, p. 108). School principals in the living systems paradigm can be viewed at the centre of a community of learners, influencing others and forging commitments to shared goals. This stands in stark contrast to the top-down approach of compliance and accountability associated with the managed system. Starratt (1997) provides a helpful metaphor when he describes educational leaders as prophets. Prophets in the Old Testament accounts were often commissioned to lead the community back to a renewed relationship with God. They constantly reminded the people of the source of their identity and directed them to a life of service within the community and in faithful obedience to God. Starratt (1997) suggests that similar to the prophets of old, educational leaders are to “remind the community in season and out the sources of their identity as a learning community” (p. 45).

Authenticity in education is not an add-on. It is an organic endeavor that permeates all of the activities and all of the relations within a school. The leaders within these schools exercise their power in service to the school, continuously directing the activities and the conversations to the purpose of authentic learning. In this way, the leaders demonstrate that they are not serving their own self-interests; rather, they are committed to serving the needs of the school. Authentic leaders have a clear vision for authentic education.

Cultural Capital

Within the field of authentic Christian education, cultural capital refers to those intangible assets that can be given or gained within the school community. A sense of community has long been cherished by supporters of private Christian schools in Ontario. It originates from an understanding of the Biblical doctrine of covenant, whereby God establishes a relationship with a group of people, promising to be their God and setting them apart to serve Him. While Christian schools might draw upon families from different denominations, the school community itself is viewed as an outworking of the broader covenant community of God. In order to sustain the endeavor of authentic Christian education, the school draws upon the resources that are available within the covenant community. These resources are more than economic or academic in nature; they are moral and involve a sense of purpose and passion for authentic Christian education. Green (2012b) describes these resources as cultural capital, which “can confer distinction upon an individual and therefore material advantage” (p. 12). The covenant community endeavors to endow the children and youth of the community with religious capital, equipping them to be more fully human in service to God.

Bartkowski, Xu, and Levin (2008) examined quantitative data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to “explore how child development is shaped by individual parents’ religiosity, the religious homogamy of couples and the family’s religious environment” (p. 18). The study was designed to look at developmental variables such as social interaction, behaviour, and approaches to learning. Based upon both parent and teacher ratings of children, the study was able to demonstrate that factors such as the religious attendance of parents and the effects of religious homogamy, had “a positive effect on child development” (p. 31). It is noteworthy that the authors identified

“stocks of religious capital” that parents can “jointly import into the family that bolsters child outcomes, particularly outside the home” (p. 33). In this secular age, some might argue that religion should be consigned to the private sphere. After examining the ongoing debate about the inclusion of religion in Canadian public schools, Clarke (2005) argues that there are “philosophical, pragmatic and educational reasons (that) justify the inclusion of religion in our public schools” (p. 374). Christian schools have long recognized the benefits of integrating the Christian faith into the academic curriculum as a means of instructing the whole child, head and heart. When school, church, and home consistently provide children and youth with the same message, cultural capital in the form of religious capital accrues.

Bartkowski et al. (2008) present religion and religious involvement as a “cultural resource” (p. 19), citing Mahoney et al. (2003):

Religion is distinctive because it incorporates people’s perceptions of the ‘sacred’ into the search for significant goals and values ... The sacred refers to the holy, to those things that are ‘set apart’ from the ordinary and deserve veneration and respect ... Indeed, part of the power of religion lies in its ability to infuse spiritual character and significance into a broad range of worldly concerns. (p. 19)

Christian education was founded upon this power of religion, viewing the child in relation to God, and honouring this relationship as he or she was taught the academic curriculum. Reeves (2012) concludes that humans, since they were created in the image of an eternally relating triune God, “are created to delight in harmonious relationship, to love God, to love each other” (p. 65). Starratt (2012) describes an ethical education as one that continuously recognizes that for each student:

the core moral agenda of their whole lives is to become richly, deeply human; to become the full flowering of the human person that their genetic, cultural, and historical inheritance makes possible; to become a heroic player on the stage of human history. (p. 87)

Elsewhere, Starratt (2007) describes the moral development of the child as “the journey or the quest for authenticity” (p. 168). However, this journey is not done in isolation; rather, “authenticity is ontologically relational” (Starratt, 2007, p. 169) where we begin to see ourselves in relation to “horizons of significance” (Taylor, 1991, p. 38). Taylor declares that authenticity “supposes demands that are beyond the self” (p. 41). This understanding of the moral agenda of each child in his or her growth and development requires a unique perspective on education and the curriculum.

An ethical education intentionally reflects on the need to create an environment where authentic learning honours the students as becoming fully human. Unauthentic education ignores or is unaware of this principle. Freire (1970) demonstrates that what often happens in schools resembles a banking concept where the teacher deposits and the students receive, file, and store the deposits. “Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat” (p. 72). In this picture, which is not uncommon, students become automatons who do very little with the new knowledge. This lack of dialogue between the learner and the subject results in what Starratt (2012) calls “make-believe learning” (p. 96) and is symptomatic of a larger problem in unauthentic schools. Starratt (2012) refers to this as triple jeopardy where students “can find neither themselves, nor the authentic subject being studied nor the integrity of the learning activity itself” (p. 97). In other words,

schools are often guilty of emphasizing the intellectual aspect of learning at the expense of the moral aspect.

Wolterstorff (2002) argues that education is for life, not simply for thought, and applies this rationale to Christian schools. It could be said that his description of education for life involves head, hands, and heart:

If you agree with me that the school aims at life and not just thought, then the school cannot be concerned just with *knowledge*. Nor can it be concerned just with knowledge plus *abilities*. It has to be concerned with what the student does with his knowledge and abilities. It has to be concerned with how the child *acts*.
(p. 177)

Wolterstorff admits that “neither the school nor anyone else can guarantee that the child will act a certain way,” but a school can “shape what he tends to do, what he is inclined to do, what he is disposed to do” (p. 177). If we want to influence someone’s actions, Wolterstorff claims, “the wisdom of the ages tells us and contemporary psychological studies confirm” that this can be done through “discipline” and “modelling” (p. 87). In other words, education for life goes beyond the provincial curriculum and involves all aspects of the school. “The school as a whole is the educative agent” (Wolterstorff, 2002, p. 90). Applying this perspective to Christian education Wolterstorff states:

Christian education, to say it once more, is for Christian life, not just for Christian thought. The Christian life is an alternative mode of life. Consequently, Christian education will have to be an alternative mode of education, not just in the sense of communicating alternative thoughts but in the much more radical sense of equipping students for an alternative way of life. (p. 177)

Wolterstorff summarizes, “Education for Christian praxis requires Christian praxis” (p. 90).

Schools tend to emphasize the intellectual aspect of education in response to the unspoken need to cover the standard provincial curriculum. Mitchell and Sackney (2009) discovered, however, that in high-capacity schools the “teachers and school administrators observed that the growth of the students was more important than the delivery of curriculum, and they wanted to design curriculum that would be relevant, contextually sensitive, interesting, and authentic” (p. 56). In these schools, curriculum was not viewed “as a static document but as a dynamic enterprise” (p. 56). Other authors (e.g., Smith, 2009; Starratt, 2000) have described the curriculum as a liturgy, a term that embodies the habits and rituals of worship. Smith (2009) views liturgies as an ontological reality whereby our habits and practices “aim to do nothing less than shape our identity by shaping our desire for what we envision as the kingdom – the ideal of human flourishing” (p. 87). Smith illustrates this ontology with contemporary examples of going to the mall or to a sports stadium, where the liturgical practices evident in these places direct our desires to the good life. Applying this to Christian schools, Smith argues that “if education is always a matter of formation, and the most profound formation happens in various liturgies, then a Christian education must draw deeply from the well of Christian liturgy” (p. 221). Starratt (2000) speaks of the “liturgy as curriculum” where we can “begin to see how the curriculum encompasses the entire work of the school: the curricula of academic coursework, community building, community service and social justice, religious education, and personal growth” (p. 61). Starratt (2000) summarizes the goal for Catholic school educators:

The sense of the sacramentality of their lives should penetrate the sense of their ministry, so they see that in the very act of bringing youngsters to insight about how a piece of history or science or literature reveals an important aspect of the human, natural or cosmic world, they are bringing them closer to an understanding of how God works in human affairs and how God speaks to students about Himself through poetry, physics, geography or a foreign language. (p. 60)

With this approach to curriculum, Christian educators who are seeking to provide an authentic Christian education will bless their students with a rich deposit of cultural capital.

Chapter Summary

This review of the literature has shown that authenticity is a concept that has garnered a fair amount of attention in sociological studies. Some authors have argued that authenticity is a moral ideal of self that is lacking in a culture that gives evidence of being unauthentic. One area in which this becomes apparent is in the area of education. Organizational structures and other factors have been shown to contribute to education that is less than authentic, where students cannot discover who they are in relation to the worlds around them. However, the literature has also presented examples of authentic education where the development of the student's authentic self is the primary focus. It follows that an authentic Christian education would focus on the development of an authentic Christian person.

The literature has shown that Christian schools in Ontario have been going through a period of stagnation. While Christian education has received some attention in the literature, along with some speculation about possible reasons for the stagnation, an

explicit connection to authenticity has not been made. It remains to be seen whether the concept of authenticity can provide a new and helpful perspective on the Christian education enterprise. The study being presented in this report was undertaken as a first step in exploring that question. The methodology used to conduct the study is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken to investigate how experienced Christian school principals understood the concept of authenticity and characterized the nature of authentic Christian education. The study was grounded in a view of Christian schools as social institutions that are uniquely positioned to be able to provide an authentic education. This chapter describes the qualitative methodology employed to collect and analyze data. The nature of qualitative research is described since all of the steps are situated within this matrix. Site and participant selection outlines the steps taken to obtain participants. Data collection describes the interview process used to obtain data. Data analysis outlines the steps taken to ensure the credibility of the data and the process by which themes were obtained from the data. The chapter ends with a brief description of the social location of the researcher and ethical considerations of the study.

Methodology

A qualitative research method was employed for the study. Creswell (2005) defines qualitative research as:

a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 39)

While quantitative research has a longer history than qualitative methods, Merriam (2009) demonstrates that sociologists, anthropologists, and people in professional fields such as education “were asking questions about people’s lives, the social and cultural contexts in which they lived, the ways in which they understood their worlds and so on” (p. 6). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research took form over the last half

century as researchers began to study social phenomena and to develop theories inductively while making observations within the natural social environment.

Merriam (2009) delineates a number of distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research. The first is a focus on meaning and understanding. “The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making and describe how people interpret what they experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). The intent of this research project was to interview experienced Christian school principals in order to discover how they make sense of the world of Christian education in Ontario. By focusing the discussion around the concept of authenticity, the principals were given an opportunity to reflect upon what they felt was essential to authentic Christian education and what their hopes and expectations were for strong Christian schools.

Merriam (2009) describes the qualitative method as being an inductive process: “Bits and pieces of information from interviews, observations or documents are combined and ordered into larger themes as the researcher works from the particular to the general” (p. 16). Although Starratt (2012) has described authentic education, the literature review demonstrated a gap in the literature regarding authenticity in Christian education. One of the objectives of this research project was to address this gap by organizing the data into themes that would develop a picture of authentic Christian education. Therefore, this research, as with other qualitative research, depended upon “the researcher (as) the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). Since the aim of the research was to expand understanding, qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to “process information (data) immediately, clarify

and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). As with other qualitative research, the final product of this research project is intentionally “richly descriptive” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). This descriptive product conveys what was discovered about authentic Christian education from experienced leaders in the field.

The type of research design for this study is defined by Kahlke (2014) as the generic qualitative approach. This approach does not necessarily fit into one of the major qualitative methodologies such as “phenomenology, ethnography and grounded theory” (p. 38), but offers a more flexible and less confined approach. Although Kahlke delineates two subcategories—the descriptive qualitative approach and interpretive description— she states that “the generic qualitative approach – also called basic qualitative or simply, interpretive – can stand alone as a researcher’s articulated approach” (p. 39). Hays and Singh (2012) state that the purpose of basic qualitative research is “to expand the scope and depth of knowledge of a case for the sake of contributing knowledge to a particular discipline” (p. 109). The purpose of this research project was to expand understanding of authentic Christian education, to take it beyond the Christian perspective approach. By discussing the concept of authenticity in relation to Christian education, the articulation of key themes contributes to the vision of authentic Christian education.

Merriam (2002) states that a central characteristic of qualitative interpretive research “is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Here the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 37). This is done when the researcher discovers “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they

attribute to their experiences” (p. 38). Merriam (2002) acknowledges that this method is common in the field of education, and the researcher “might draw upon concepts, models and theories” from different branches of psychology as well as “sociology to frame the study” (p. 38). This research project has been constructed around a conceptual framework developed by the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, and used by Green (2012b) in her study of Christian schools. The concepts of field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital formed the framework for the interviews with Christian school principals. These interviews focussed on discovering how they interpreted their experiences as leaders of Christian education as well as how they constructed authentic Christian education within each of their school environments.

Site and Participant Selection

The type of sampling used for this research project was purposeful sampling. Sandelowski (2000) states that “the ultimate goal of purposeful sampling is to obtain cases deemed information-rich for the purposes of study” (p. 338). Moreover, sample selection is “usually (but not always) non-random, purposeful, and small” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). Principals were chosen because as leaders in Christian schools they, above all others, would have answers to questions dealing with the big picture of Christian education. Their experiences form the bridge between theoretical ideals and the day-to-day affairs of Christian schools. To obtain a broader range of perspectives, Christian schools were chosen that had their own unique history, supported by communities that were not alike.

Three Christian school principals agreed to participate in the study. Each of the participants had careers in Christian education spanning more than 25 years. Each of the participants had taught in Christian schools and served in administration as either a vice

principal or principal. One participant had been a principal for 4 years, while the remaining participants were principals for much longer. Each of the participants had served a number of Christian schools throughout Canada. None of the three schools that were chosen for this study were affiliated with one another in any formal setting. In other words, each Christian school had a unique history and served a distinct Christian community. All of these factors contributed to an opportunity to gather data from a broad range of perspectives, which contributed to a fuller understanding of authentic Christian education. Given the relatively small Christian school community in Ontario, no further demographic descriptions of the participants or the schools are provided in order to protect participants' identities.

Data Collection

Although interviews served as the primary data collection method, public documents from the schools, such as foundational statements and statements of guiding principles, were used to set up probing questions. Creswell (2005) describes documents as “a good source for text (word) data for a qualitative study” with the advantage that they have been written by those “who have usually given thoughtful attention to them” (p. 219). Green (2012a) examined such documents in her study of Christian schools in order to analyze whether the discourse of senior staff was consistent with the ethos statements of the school. In a similar manner, these documents were reviewed by the researcher before each interview so that questions could be tied directly to each school's public statements about Christian education.

Hays and Singh (2012) observe that individual interviews “are the most widely used qualitative data collection method” (p. 237). Creswell (2005) explains that “one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are

articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably” (p. 215). This description fit each of the principals who were interviewed as part of this study. Moreover, this style of data collection allowed the research to go in unexpected directions based upon each principal’s experience and understanding. This allowed the discussion to grow and provided a broad scope for data analysis.

The methodology relied on semistructured interviews, which “uses an interview protocol as a guide and starting point for the interview” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239) but leaves room in the interview to ask other questions or to leave out some questions. Hays and Singh observe that this method also allows the interviewee to have “more say in the structure and process” of the interview and in general “provides a richer picture of a phenomenon under investigation” (p. 239). Shortly before the day of the interview, an electronic version of the interview guide was sent to each participant. The interview guide (see Appendix A) was developed as a list of questions organized within the conceptual framework of field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. Each section was introduced with an overarching empirical question. Hays and Singh identify several types of questions to be used including demographic questions, value questions, knowledge questions, and experience questions. Examples of these types of questions are found in the interview guide. As the interview progressed, probing questions that were not written ahead of time were posed to “get interviewees to provide a richer interview because their voices are important” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 242).

The interviews were recorded with the use of an audio recorder, and the recordings were transcribed following the interview. Transcripts are “used not only as physical evidence of collected data but also as important data management and analysis tools” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 257). In order to ensure the reliability of the transcribed

data, member checking was employed, a method whereby the transcripts are reviewed by the interviewee. Creswell (2005) explains that through member checking the participants are asked to “check the accuracy of the account” (p. 252). The process also ensures that the data are reliable. In their use of member checking, Hays and Singh not only ask the interviewee to check for accuracy but they also encourage the interviewee to “expand on any responses he or she would like to say more about in the existing transcript” (p. 260). In order to distinguish these comments, the interviewee is asked to add these comments in a different colour on the transcript. In addition to incorporating these strategies into this study, the participants were invited to review for accuracy a summarized version of the data they individually provided. These measures served as the primary strategy for ensuring data credibility.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) explains the purpose of data analysis by stating that “describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development” (p. 241). The central phenomenon of this research project was authentic Christian education. Therefore, data analysis drew from the insights offered by the participants about what authentic Christian education meant and looked like.

Creswell (2005) explains that data analysis in qualitative research begins with an exploratory analysis in order “to obtain a general sense of the data” (p. 237). For this study, the process began by reading and summarizing each interview. The transcript was sent to the interviewees to confirm the accuracy of the data record, and the summary was sent to affirm the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The second step involved the

process of coding, creating “text segments,” and “assigning a code word or phrase that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment” (Creswell, 2005, p. 238). Kahlke (2014) suggests that “in an effort to remain ‘close to the data’” researchers “most often use codes generated from the data, including ... codes that use language drawn directly from the data” (p. 40). In this manner, for each of the four parts of the interview, descriptive codes were listed in a chart to allow for comparison between interviews (see Appendix B). In addition to the codes, notable quotes and important thoughts were also identified for ease of reference. The codes were refined by grouping similar codes and eliminating redundant codes in order to reduce the codes and capture the meaningful data in a manageable number of categories.

As the descriptive codes were reduced and refined, big ideas began to be distilled that answered the core question: What is authentic Christian education? Within-case analysis consisted of identifying the big ideas and supporting codes for each interview. Cross-case analysis was then conducted to draw out themes that were evident across the interviews. Themes are defined by Creswell (2005) as “similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database” (p. 239). This process produced six potential themes. With the six themes in mind, the transcripts were read again and data categorized according to the characteristics of each theme. In this process, all of the data were accounted for as having been captured under the six themes.

Social Location of the Researcher

Since the research method followed a qualitative method, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Although my biases might have had an impact on this study, Merriam (2009) suggests that “rather than trying to eliminate these biases or ‘subjectivities’, it is important to identify them and monitor them as to

how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data” (p. 15). This is not necessarily easily done since “the very way researchers talk about their subject matter reflects their leanings, regardless of whether they present these inclinations as such or even recognize them” (Sandelowski, 2009, p. 79). As a vice principal in a private Christian school for many years, I had a passion for Christian education. I was also captivated by Taylor’s (1991) call for the retrieval of the ideal of authenticity and inspired by Starratt’s (2012) call for authentic education. These leanings are evident in the purpose of this research project and in the line of questioning that formed the basis of the interviews. In order to ensure the credibility of the results, the themes that were identified were also clearly connected to the data. Due to the nature of qualitative research, the themes that I selected arose from where the data took me. Nevertheless, in the discussion and implications of the study, I endeavoured to show direct connections between my interpretations and the findings.

Since I am part of the Christian school community and have served in a leadership capacity within a Christian school, I would be considered by the principals I interviewed as an insider. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) describe the researcher as an insider when they share the “characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants” (p. 55). However, I have not served in the capacity of a principal, and my past experiences are different from those whom I interviewed. Therefore, I could also be considered an outsider. This position is accentuated by my role as researcher, having spent much time reading literature on authenticity and authentic education. Dwyer and Buckle summarize the position this way:

The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and because of our role as researchers, it does not

qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the cost and benefits this status affords. (p. 61)

The principals from whom I solicited participation in this study are familiar with me and the school in which I have served. Some of them know me better than others but in all cases the participants appeared to be comfortable discussing the topic with me.

Sandelowski (2009) clarifies the unique mandate of a qualitative researcher this way:

The mandate for researchers embarking on any qualitative study is to make explicit – for themselves and others – where they were when they began their studies (usually accomplished via a review of the theoretical and empirical literature), and to be ready and willing to move away from there if their further investigation warrant it. (p. 80)

Through purposeful selection of participants with varied experiences in Christian education, along with a concerted effort to rely upon the data collected from the interviews, I tried to step beyond my own leanings. By framing the conversations around authenticity, I brought a new perspective that the participants had not considered in relation to Christian education. The ground that was covered in this research was uncharted; therefore, my own perspectives relied heavily on what the participants said about authenticity in Christian education.

Ethical Considerations

The research project followed the ethical guidelines established by the Brock University Research Ethics Review Board (see file # 14-247). The participants selected for this research project were invited to participate in a one-on-one in-person interview with me. They were fully informed of the purposes of the study and the extent of their participation, and they were encouraged to participate only if they wished to do so. They

were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or refrain from answering any questions they might have felt uncomfortable to answer. I requested access to public documents such as foundational statements or guiding principles, and they were free to turn down the request, although none chose to do so. The participants were asked if I could record the interview with an audio recorder. I only recorded with their permission. Participants were informed that, for the purposes of data collection and transcription, their name and school would be recorded in my files so that they could examine the transcript of their interview for accuracy. However, they were assured that anonymity would be protected in any publications pertaining to the study. Specifically, pseudonyms were used in the report, and no information that could potentially identify them or their school was included. The participants were also informed that the data collected would only be used for publications relating directly to this research project.

Chapter Summary

To answer the core question: What is authentic Christian education? three experienced Christian school principals were invited to participate in individual interviews. The interview guide was structured around four areas: field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. It used semistructured questions in order to provide flexibility, to follow probing questions, and to gather a robust set of data. Through descriptive coding, data reduction, and cross-case analysis, six themes were identified. Based upon the findings of this study, the next chapter presents the data sorted into two parts. The first part, comprehending authenticity, presents three themes: characteristics of authenticity, authentic Christianity, and authentic Christian education. The second part, cultivating a Christian school, presents the participants' perspectives on what is

necessary for and what is produced by an authentic Christian education . The three themes presented in this part are: leadership in community, cultivating Christian school culture, and cultural capital.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

From the data that were collected, six themes have been derived and organized into two parts to help create “pathways through the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 46). The first part lays out the conceptual feature of authenticity. The three themes in that part present the participants’ understanding of authenticity, their view of authentic Christianity, along with their consideration of the importance of this concept to Christian education. In the second part of this chapter, the participants describe how an authentic Christian school should be cultivated. The three themes in that part describe the nature of leadership in Christian schools, the intentional work of cultivating school culture, and the social capital that students can gain.

Comprehending Authenticity

As the participants addressed the central question in their interviews, they interacted with their own understanding of the word “authenticity.” This was evident throughout each of the interviews, but Chris summed it up well:

The word authentic is a curious word, in defining that I appreciate this because it’s like the word integrity, the word love. It’s an interesting word, hard to define, yet everybody seems to know what you are talking about when you say it.

Everybody has their own internal definition of what it really means. So it’s an interesting word, and a neat one to get at with the research paper.

Chris agreed that while at its basic definition the word authentic evokes a sense of genuineness, there seemed to be more to this word. In the interviews, the participants revealed three characteristics of authenticity. The participants then applied their understanding of authenticity to what they believed constitutes Christianity. While their individual religious narratives differed, the interviews revealed common understandings

of the Christian faith that flowed naturally from their discourses. Finally, the participants brought the characteristics of authenticity and the key features of the Christian faith together as they described their view of what constitutes an authentic Christian education.

Characteristics of Authenticity

Each of the participants addressed the relational nature of human beings as a characteristic of authenticity. Charlie agreed that humans are relational “both vertically and horizontally.” The vertical relation is in reference to God while the horizontal relation is directed toward others. In a similar manner, Chris described the need to converse with students, especially during times of discipline, “because the long view is, what are we going to do that’s going to help that person be a better person down the road, how will they contribute to society, how will they interact with others?” Chris identified a foundational biblical text for their school that encouraged students and staff to develop “love and deep respect” by loving “the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and by loving “your neighbor as yourself” (Matt.22:37,39, NKJV). Responding to the allure in society to be self-centered, Jamie stated:

I’m not saying that Christians are not self-centered, but they have to remind themselves and each other that in the end it’s about God and in relation to God also the relationship to our neighbor – to those He places in our immediate context.

Jamie identified individualism as an unauthentic expression of this relation. “I may need others, but only to sort of propel myself forward.” In a similar vein, Charlie stated that many today are seeking to develop their own identity apart from any standard set by others:

When you focus on individualism, of course, you no longer recognize that there's a bar or that there is a standard that you are comparing yourself to or that you are called to achieve. You set your own standard, which is really no standard at all. Applying this relational element to the classroom context, Jamie concluded, "Students remind you of your own relational being; so you give of yourself to them, but they also give of themselves to you."

A second characteristic of authenticity evident in all of the interviews was that of excellence. Since authenticity connotes the idea of genuineness, the participants did not hesitate to emphasize that an authentic Christian education must be excellent. Jamie described excellence as a quality that Christian schools must have before the watchful eye of society. "We have to make sure that our Christian schools are excellent schools – and excellent schools also means that we do our work honestly." In a similar fashion, Charlie described the relationship that Christian schools in Ontario have with the Ministry of Education, linking excellence with honesty:

Up until this point, I think that we could legitimately offer the OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma). I think we've met and/or exceeded all of its expectations, and we've done that authentically. We haven't needed to fabricate anything or to say, "Well, you know, we're not really doing this." No, we teach their curriculum. We teach it very well. We teach it from our perspective, but we teach it honestly.

For Charlie, doing things very well was a proper response to the biblical directive to "do what we do very well as to God, not just to serve man, but to honour God." Charlie saw excellence as a characteristic of authenticity.

Authentic is related, I think, to doing things very well also. When God created everything, the recurring theme is, it was very good. It was good, it was good, it was very good. I think that needs to be a hallmark of Christian education as well. Charlie “was always driven by wanting Christian education to be more than just a secular education with a Sunday school coating,” and contrasted that with excellent Christian education: “So I wanted more than a superficial Christian coating or Christian morality or Christian ethics. From the start, I really thought that one of the tenets of Christian education is that it has to be a good quality education.” Similarly, Chris had experienced the façade of excellence in teachers who at first blush appeared to be very good but then demonstrated that they were lacking. “I think there are times when we in Christian education have, because of a person’s character, we’ve disregarded their competence.” Chris warned that “mediocrity in the guise of Christian character” was a threat to authentic Christian education. Chris expected excellence to be found in teachers who provided expert instruction. “Christian education is more about Christian educators offering expert instruction.” For each of the participants, excellence was an integral component of authentic Christian education.

Reflection was a final characteristic evident throughout the interviews. The topic of authenticity in Christian education resonated with Jamie since reflection played a big part in Jamie’s career:

So reflecting on my work was something I did right from the start, and I have never left that. I still am always thinking about why I do what I do, how I do it, what I am doing, how am I changed, and especially, I think, how do I as a Christian educator affect the life of my students. The notion of reflection and how thinking about who you are and what you do, and to connect those two, that

formed the core of my work. So when I heard about your topic, authenticity in Christian education, I thought, “Yes, that speaks to my heart.”

Jamie emphasized that both authentic Christian school teachers and school societies needed to develop a reflective practice. Christian schools that have been around for a number of years may have begun with great zeal and attention to the core commitments but in time they could “slip into just the malaise of doing the same thing over and over without really being able to articulate why you do what you do.” Jamie believed that in order to ward off this malaise, it was necessary to intentionally reflect upon and rearticulate “why you have the school you have” and “you have to do it at all levels – the levels of the parents, and supporting community, but also within the staff.” Chris observed that while you want to encourage autonomy, and even allow for a measure of risk taking, “you still have to be reflective, you still have to learn from it.” Charlie identified reflection as one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role of the principal:

I have the privilege of being supported and paid by a community to sit around and think. It’s a really important thing for leaders to be doing. Somebody’s got to be thinking about this enterprise, and that thinking needs to produce something.

Charlie agreed that Christian schools that lost sight of the core commitments risked slipping into this malaise and becoming unauthentic:

You’re right to tie that to authenticity, because those who have been the critics of the conservative Christian schools that are still in this province, they accuse us of lagging behind the times or not keeping up with modern things, etc. But it’s our commitment to biblical standards and to commonly accepted Reformed standards for generations that makes us authentic.

In addition to the relational element and the quality of excellence, this act of contemplation was a necessary component of authenticity for each of the participants.

Authentic Christianity

For each of the participants, the fact that God is the author of creation was a key understanding of authentic Christianity that played out in their view of the child, as well as their vision of Christian education. Chris' understanding that God created each student produced a deep respect for the learner:

If you deeply respect the learner as God created, as fearfully and wonderfully made, that they are all different, that they are all created to learn and therefore motivated to learn, if I believe that as a Christian, then that needs to come through in my expertise in how I teach.

Jamie studied the etymology of the word “authentic,” and discovered a link to genuine authorship. As Jamie said, “If I had to think of authentic Christian education, I would want to think about that in the larger context of Christ being the author of life.”

Examining why God created and what our function was within that creation provided Jamie with a purpose for authentic Christian education. Referencing the Belgic Confession, one of the church's confessional documents, Jamie said:

So why did God create what He did create, and what is our function within that? It talks about that: “to the end that man may serve God.” Right? And to me authentic education, “to the end that man may serve his God,” is what Christian education ought to be all about.”

Charlie provided a similar perspective:

How does that show up in our program, that we reflect that God is the creator and that He didn't just make it but He wants it to be sustained in a particular way?

We need to prepare students to know about that creation, how it works, and to have the inclination to take care of it in this particular way.

All of the participants demonstrated that confessing God as the author of creation had implications for authentic Christian education.

Throughout their interviews, the participants referenced the Bible as a means by which God communicates standards to live by. Charlie illustrated by pointing to the Chinese culture, “one of the longest surviving cultures in history,” where respect for their elders was a strong characteristic. Charlie highlighted the longevity of this culture by making the connection to the fifth commandment, to “Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you,” (Ex. 20:12, NKJV). Charlie’s point was that God as the author of creation has set normative standards and when they are followed they lead to a strong culture:

So that’s authentic. So it’s authentic because it is a biblical model, and God does exist. Whether the nations recognize Him or not, He is there, and He has expectations for how people are to live, and they are not an onerous set of requirements. These are for our good.

These biblical norms also formed the basis for authentic Christian education. Jamie emphasized that teachers should plan their instruction by beginning with the “Why?” question:

I think the premise of why we do what we do has to be different in the end, has to be different from those who will teach without a norm of Scripture, a norm of the Bible, without thinking of a Christian approach.

The participants demonstrated that authentic Christianity submits to the norm of the Bible, acknowledging that God as the author of creation is the ultimate authority.

The participants demonstrated that authentic Christians believe that God as the author of creation is not distant, but that they live their lives in relationship with Him. This relational element was of fundamental importance to Jamie as a person and as a Christian educator:

So I would think that a core pillar for me would be that firm belief that we are not our own. We belong to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ, but we were also created by God the Father, and that we are also doing our work through the working of the Holy Spirit. So to me the real core that runs through my life but also runs through why we have the schools we have is that understanding.

Jamie identified the three persons of the Trinity, God the Father, Jesus Christ the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as being active in the Christian's life. For Jamie, an implication of living in relationship with God was that Christian living necessarily focused on God and not on self: "It's all about God and in relation to God, also the relationship to our neighbour, to those that He places in our immediate context." At Chris' school this focus on the other was a constant challenge:

What does it mean to deeply respect the other? What does it mean to deeply respect yourself? And what does that mean to do that within the idea of a God-created world? That's something we are constantly trying to unpack.

For Chris, the best way to "unpack" what it meant to live as authentic Christians was to look at the life of Jesus Christ. "What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ and then how do we see that even in our world today?"

However, Charlie explained that the Bible reveals that the relationship that God has with humanity has been broken and needs to be restored. Charlie pulled no punches: "The Bible says that our condition right from before we were born is that we are inclined

to hate God and to hate our neighbor.” Again Charlie stood by the confession that Christians “wholeheartedly accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God.” For Charlie, this was a foundational pillar of Christianity, that “there is truth and that for Christians, the only truth is God’s truth” as revealed in the Bible. But Charlie went on to explain that the Bible also reveals that God repairs and restores that relationship:

The tremendous change of heart that there needs to be for us to love God has to be driven by faith, by the work of the Spirit, and by the work of the preaching of the Word, so that the heart that is inclined to hate God turns and is inclined to love Him and love fellow man.

Later, Charlie added, “That’s why He (God) sent Jesus Christ, so that all of this evil nature, all of these evil inclinations of our hearts can be turned around.” In this description of the restoration of the relationship with God, Charlie identified all three persons of the Trinity.

For the participants, living in this restored relationship as authentic Christians meant living in conscious dependence upon this Trinitarian God. Chris gave expression to this dependence at the close of the interview by saying, “We’re not perfect at what we do; we just keep relying on God’s blessing and try to do things in a godly way.” Jamie believed that this close relationship with God should be evident in teachers’ lives. “So if you walk closely with your God, how do your colleagues see that? Your students should see that too.” But Charlie showed that identifying oneself as a Christian also meant living with a conscious awareness that the relationship that was broken had been restored:

The tremendous good news of Christianity is the grace of God through Jesus Christ. That’s why it’s called Christian after all. Right? Christ turns it all around, turns everything on its head. He turns us all back to being able to do all

of these things authentically, because what we were doing before was not authentic. It was all against, all against, all against and only things that are done in harmony with that plan of God are authentic, linking that notion then to authority.

In summary, the participants showed that authentic Christianity confesses God as the author of creation and that authentic Christian living occurs in a restored relationship with God.

Authentic Christian Education

All of the participants acknowledged that God is the author of creation and that authorship must impact Christian education. Jamie believed that people were created to serve God and, therefore, this “is what Christian education ought to be all about.” Chris asked rhetorically, “What does it mean to be God created?” Charlie provided an apologetic for Christian education that rested upon what is known as the cultural mandate. This mandate harkens back to the first chapter of the book of Genesis where God says, “Your task is to develop all of these things that I have created to My glory.” Charlie explained this rationale for Christian education:

We observe the world, we learn about it, and we understand the structures that God has created, and we build on that understanding, so that we have wholesome relationships between people, and between people and the planet and the creation, and we can develop the culture both technologically and artistically, and in all of those various areas.

Charlie remarked that for those with a worldview that does not acknowledge God, education “exists to serve personal interests, peculiar interests, and individual interests.” In contrast, Charlie asserted:

I think that for me, the only authentic education is education that directly recognizes that there is a God in heaven, that He made all of this, that He has requirements for us, and whatever we do in education has to be in harmony with meeting those demands and requirements.

Charlie concluded, “What makes it Christian is 'How does our academic enterprise fit in harmony with the requirements of God’s Word?’”

Reflecting back upon a more vibrant period in Christian education in Ontario a number of decades ago, Charlie recalled that the supporting Reformed Christian churches “clearly emphasized a reformed world-and-life view” that necessitated Christian education. Charlie explained the correlation:

If Christ is Lord, if you accept Christ as the Lord of your heart, He is also Lord of Christian education. So that was a great mandate for, “Of course we have to have Christian schools,” right? “We serve God and we need to have our kids in schools where they are taught to serve God.” In its initial years, it wasn’t really a protest against the public schools. It was an understanding of the Reformed community that our schools need to honour God in education.

Responding to the decline in Christian education in Ontario in recent decades, Charlie linked the decline to a failure to promote this world-and-life view. “The result has been that, regrettably, some Christian schools have abandoned their strong commitment to a Reformed world-and-life view, to be more general schools to try and appeal to a broader Christian audience.” Charlie was convinced that “it’s our commitment to biblical standards and to commonly accepted Reformed standards for generations that makes us authentic.” Charlie concluded, “What makes it (Christian education) authentic, the core

of these things, has not changed. So our commitment to that core is what makes us authentic.”

In addition to abandoning a Reformed world-and-life view, the participants described other outlooks that would make Christian education unauthentic. Chris once thought that attention must be placed upon ensuring that a Christian perspective was evident in the curriculum. Chris warned:

If our idea of being a Christian school remains [that], in the curriculum we have a Christian perspective, but not being attentive to how we actually teach or how we behave or what our policies look like, that’s not enough.

Chris now believed that authentic Christian education involves “Christian educators offering expert instruction and if you understand that God created the world, those two things have to come together in a deep respect for the learner.” All of the participants were careful to distinguish authentic Christian education from the education program of the church. Charlie pointed out that while “instruction in the doctrine of the Scriptures” is “a legitimate exercise of the church,” it “does not speak to why we teach geography or biology or music or art.” Chris brought it back to the relational element:

This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It’s not about doctrine; it’s about how do we live with one another. And trying to bring real world experiences; speak honestly and truthfully about that, and not in a preachy sort of way.

In a similar manner, Jamie described how teachers needed to think through that relational filter as they prepared their lessons:

How do we do that to get to know God more fully but also to act responsibly towards each other? So I would sort of, without preaching, I would work with the

teachers ... that they think through that filter of that relational element all the time. That sort of has to be your starting point.

The participants noted that authentic Christian education plumbed deeper than a Christian perspective statement included in the curriculum and reached beyond the education program of supporting churches.

The participants also described the manner in which Christian education remained authentically Christian. While policies, procedures, and practices help, the essential need day-to-day was Christian teachers. Jamie described “authentic Christian teachers” who are always “thinking Christianly” and “who are always reflecting on that.” Jamie provided a helpful metaphor: “Teaching Christianly should be like baking banana bread ... you don’t have a little piece of banana here and there, but it’s completely interwoven with the texture of that bread.” In other words, unauthentic Christian education sprinkled Christianity on top or included little Christian nuggets from time to time. Chris believed that this was something students would appreciate, even if they couldn’t express it in so many words:

If you ask students, what’s the best thing about (this school), they are going to say, “We know teachers care.” I don’t think they would be able to describe exactly what they mean by “care” but I do think what they’re really saying is, our teachers are authentic. They’re authentic Christian people. Then I would also put expertise in that. You can’t tease those two things away from each other.

Chris and Jamie were demonstrating that authentic Christian teaching required teachers to know more than the subject matter and teaching methodology. They must always be thinking through the Christian commitment part as well.

As with other schools, Christian schools are academic institutions; therefore, the participants described the components of authentic education. Charlie pointed out that elementary education is “highly knowledge based” as is secondary education, which “becomes more relational.” Jamie introduced the expectation for excellence, not “only for your academic students, but also a high knowledge standard for your applied students.” Recognizing that “the body of knowledge (applied students) need to know might be different,” Jamie emphasized that these students must also be challenged to “know something and know that well.” Jamie moved on to describe the skills component:

To know isn’t good enough, but how do you act on what you know, and how do you get tools for that? Your toolbox as a Christian should be well-filled. How do you communicate your knowledge? How do you show it? How do you demonstrate it, and find ways and means of doing it?

Jamie observed that these two components, knowledge and skills, “are often observable and even measurable ... you can assess these things.” The participants also identified a third component, commitment, alternatively described as inclination or habits of the heart. Jamie described commitment as follows:

Has your learning actually touched you as a person? Are you different from the day you walked in? And I think it doesn’t matter where you teach, whether you teach in a Christian environment or in a secular environment. Every, I think, teacher who loves his or her work will want to encourage a student to be different from day one compared to the last day of the semester.

With these questions, Jamie suggested that authentic education involved a reflective activity as well. Charlie demonstrated that authentic education honoured people's relational nature, too:

Education is by its very nature a cognitive activity. It's an academic activity. I suppose you can have people who have an intellectual acquiescence of all of this stuff – know it, and know it well. But if we haven't developed in them a heart's desire to use that knowledge in a positive way towards God, and towards fellow man and towards the creation, then we've failed miserably.

While the three components of education were described distinctly, they were not viewed separately. As Jamie said, “So I think you can never distinguish knowledge from the affective domain, nor from the skills.” Charlie illustrated the interrelated nature of the three components by referring to the cultural mandate:

You are going to be a steward of creation, for example, so that you don't just know the Earth needs caring for and that this is how you do it, but that you actually commit yourself for the rest of your life to do that.

Both Charlie and Jamie compared knowledge, skills, and commitment to head, hands, and heart. In their description of authentic education, they provided evidence of the three qualities of authenticity: excellence, reflection, and relation.

The participants' attention to the three components of authentic Christian education provided a window onto their view of the child that was made more explicit as they described how they thought the child should be taught. Part of the “deep respect for the learner as God created” that Chris spoke about was demonstrated by setting high expectations and then providing students with support:

If you take either of these two extremes you've got problems. If you don't have high expectations, you settle for mediocrity. If you only ever take the person where they're at, then you may not be setting enough high expectations, you're just letting them be who they are; it's that idea that we'll just accept you for who you are. Well, does that really move them forward? So you have to bring those two together.

Chris summed up this position by saying, "Adults in training. I think that's what makes Christian education authentic, treating students respectfully as human beings." Charlie spoke about "classical education" as an approach to education whereby you "just open the tops of their heads and you pour information into it, and say to them, 'You'll use this later on in your life.'" Charlie contrasted this view of the child with that of a Reformed world-and-life view:

A Reformed world-and-life view would say that even as 5-year olds, you need to make an authentic 5-year-old response to what we know, how we do it, and that we are inclined to do it. And it's age appropriate, of course, and your response at 5 is going to be different than it is at 15, or at 25 or at 45. But the demand of the gospel remains the same.

A corollary to Charlie's biblically informed view of the student was that authentic education must be teacher directed. Charlie cited Summerhill in England and the Hull-Dennis report in Ontario as evidence to support this perspective:

But the reason that education also in some Christian schools, and certainly in public schools, is no longer teacher-directed is because all the focus is on the child, and that's because of a worldview of the child as a person who is interested, and who will make good choices, and who will choose the right things, and who,

if given the proper conditions and the proper incentives, will always make the proper choices, and that's a false view, in my opinion, of human nature.

Yet, as Charlie emphasized, the “tremendous good news of Christianity is the grace of God through Jesus Christ,” which is also afforded to children. Therefore, Charlie was convinced that authentic education must be teacher-directed out of a concern for the well-being of the student:

So it's not mean-spirited towards children in any way. It has the best intentions of those children at heart, but I think it's mean to children just to lay on them, when they're not nearly ready for it, the responsibility to direct their own learning.

Chris believed that if authentic education was teacher-directed, then the onus was on the teachers to become expert instructors, to know how students learn:

I think authentic education ... is a focus on the learner, so making sure that people understand how people learn, what drives learning, being an expert on how that happens, but also having a clear sense of purpose, in other words “Why?”

Chris, thus, positioned excellence and reflection, two qualities of authenticity, as attributes of teachers who cared about their students.

Cultivating a Christian School

As the participants described their vision of an authentic Christian school, the characteristics of authenticity were evident in their description of the life of a Christian school. The core beliefs and values of the school originated within the school's supporting community, and the students, teachers, administrative staff, and all others actively involved with the school contributed to the school's culture. As experienced principals serving Christian school communities, the participants were able to shed light on the challenges and opportunities facing the leadership of these schools. The

participants also described the varied ways that Christian school culture was nurtured by those involved in the life of the school. All of this effort by the community and staff was ultimately for the growth and maturation of the children who attended the Christian school. These children were seen as moral beings living and growing in the midst of a school culture and the broader culture of society. Therefore, the participants described the cultural capital that students of authentic Christian schools gained, equipping them for their role within their social groups and society at large.

Leadership in Community

As active and experienced principals serving Christian school communities, the participants were able to describe the dynamics of Christian school leadership. Each private Christian school in Ontario is governed by a board of directors, elected by the membership of the school society. The membership, which includes the parents who send their children to the school along with other supporters of the school, establish expectations and commitments for the school. Charlie described the role of the board as “maintaining sort of the trust of the community in knowing the expectations of the community for this school.” According to Charlie, the board of directors, as representatives of the community, were:

the custodians of the constitution and they are to protect that and they are to take that seriously. To defend it, they need to be strongly committed to that view of the kind of school that they are, and to make sure that its supporters, its membership, the parent body, remain well-educated about the purposes of the school and committed to it.

Charlie later clarified that the board of directors were not only custodians of the constitution, but “also its statement of faith and guiding principles, and all of the

foundational documents of the school.” Chris agreed that “the board of directors, their main job is to protect and promote the vision of this school, the mission vision of this school.” How did they do this? Chris believed that:

The number one way they do that is to hire the administration, to hire the person that’s going to run this place. That’s the number one job. Equip that person to do their job, hold that person accountable for doing their job.

The role of the principal then became one of representing the community’s expectations as presented by the board of directors. Charlie explained this relationship further:

So in some ways they (board of directors) have only one employee, and they charge that employee with making sure that all of those things that the board is committed to and that the community is committed to are being developed in the school.

Therefore, the Christian school community expressed their expectations and commitments through the election of the directors, who, in turn, ensured that the expectations and commitments were being met by hiring and equipping the principal.

The interviews revealed that the principals did not lord their authority over anyone, but rather used their power and professional training to serve the community. Reflecting on a long career in Christian education, Charlie said, “It was really exciting for me to think about what I was doing on a daily basis in the context of serving God, serving people, serving students, serving the family, serving the Christian community.” Jamie was also aware of the role of the principal in relation to the community. “They hired me ... I never liked the CEO idea; I think you’re more in a serving capacity ... I’m appointed to serve the community through my professional practice.” Jamie explained further:

So you felt a little bit like a gatekeeper. You knew what the community expected. Now it's up to you to make it happen with your teachers from day to day. So it's not so much, I think, a power relation in terms of top down, but it is more within those concentric circles. You're all part of the very community that you serve. Part of the "professional practice" that Jamie referred to involved working with the board of directors to reflect upon and rearticulate the community's commitments and expectations for the school:

Every so often a community, so call it the school system, so I would then also include parents, I would include board committees, staff, your administration – you need to sort of sit back and have your typical vision/mission/values discussion; just pick out something that has been part of your logo for the last 10 years. Is that still alive? And if it is alive, can we, again, re-articulate that? So, yes, we have a logo, we don't want to change that, but for today and tomorrow and beyond, how are we going to make that come alive in our work at all the various levels?

The participants demonstrated that Christian schools were communities in which leaders served by protecting, promoting, and reflecting upon the community's expectations for the school.

As principals, the participants also testified that they operated within a paradox of autonomy and community. Chris described a paradox as "living in creative tension, you know there's always things pulling at each other; how do we live in that paradox?" While the principals spoke of the fact that they, along with their teaching staff, were part of a community, they also spoke of the need to have and give space. Chris referred to teachers as experts in their field and connected that to autonomy:

So if autonomy means I get to do whatever I want, then that's a problem. If autonomy means I'm trusted to be an expert in what I do, and I'm actually expected to be an expert in what I do – go do it! Right?

Chris felt that even though some control was lost, teachers needed to be given the space to be innovative:

If taking a risk with learning is a good thing, if we want people to be innovative, then we have to give them the space to be innovative. Right? If we're always telling them, "This is what you can do and what you can't do," they're not going to be innovative, they're always going to wonder, "Ok, is there a problem with what I'm doing?"

The principals also spoke of the need to have space to lead. Referring to the board of directors, Chris said, "They have to give me the space to do what I do, just like I give teachers the space to do what they do. But then I'm responsible for those things." The principals also realized that autonomy presupposed responsibility. As Chris said, "If I'm here to lead, then I need to take the space to lead." This might be a fearful thing but Charlie viewed this as part of authentic leadership: "I think that for an enterprise like this, part of the authenticity is that you accept the reality of leadership, that leadership is not a shared responsibility."

The participants also illustrated that along with the autonomy given by the community came the responsibility to lead within the community. Jamie used the illustration of the recently introduced Health and Physical Education curriculum. When it was released, there was quite a backlash in the media and, as Jamie cautioned, this was "something that really runs away very, very quickly." As a principal, Jamie said that this was an occasion "where I would think that your professionalism needs to inform, yes, the

directorship of let's say the board in this case," so that "together then you can make a responsible decision that in the end will serve the society that you serve." The participants also indicated that as autonomous leaders within their classrooms, teachers must take up the responsibility to direct learning within their class. Charlie made it clear that classroom environments did not need to be conducted lockstep like all of the others:

The teacher can have a very open learning experience but that's at the teacher's discretion. Right? And does it stifle student interest or whatever? I don't see that. No, I see students meaningfully engaged, and teachers are happy to accept student input and student ideas and all that sort of stuff. But teachers retain the responsibility to direct the education of the students.

The participants showed that authentic Christian school leaders manifested their professionalism when they took upon themselves the responsibilities they had when they were given space to be autonomous.

Part of the tension that occurs in the paradox between autonomy and community is the risk of damaging the community. Jamie gave expression to this concern:

"Otherwise, I think, you run the risk that you have, you know, in an eight-room school, you have eight little Christian schools under one roof." To guard against that, Jamie suggested that principals needed to act as coaches sometimes that "kindle some collegiality throughout the course of a day" because "there has to be a very healthy Christian atmosphere among the teachers as colleagues." At Chris' school, each Friday morning the staff worked together on research and development. Chris described the motivation:

If I believe people are intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated, then the research and development we do Friday mornings is meant to equip

teachers to grow in wisdom, stature, and favour with God and man; you keep equipping them. Where is the accountability? Well, look at the conversations teachers are having with each other every Friday morning; they're accountable to each other.

Within the discussion of teacher autonomy, the principals also described their responsibility for supervision. Each of the principals preferred to describe their relationship with their staff not as "power-over" but rather as "power-to." Chris said, "The power is about serving, the power is about blessing, the power is about equipping." For Chris, classroom visits were not occasions for evaluating: "For me, it's not I go in there to evaluate, I need to go in there to be grateful." Chris admitted that most principals would lament not visiting classrooms enough. Jamie agreed,

I need to make sure that I touch base with them (teachers) on a regular basis, and not just formally again, but pop into rooms and just sort of say, "Hi," if nothing else, before or after school, or whatever.

In terms of authenticity, Charlie placed teacher supervision within the scope of the big picture:

As long as you are doing your work within harmony of that overall goal and objective, I am fully supportive of what you're doing, and if I need to correct you it's because it's not in harmony with that particular goal.

Charlie, thus, demonstrated that responsibility and accountability were tied to the core commitments of the Christian school community.

Cultivating Christian School Culture

Each of the participants spoke about the need for authentic Christian school leaders, especially the principal, to keep the core values of the school community in the

foreground. The data revealed that they were aware of how easily the day-to-day affairs could take over and consume any opportunity to reflect upon the “Why?” questions.

Charlie cautioned:

You ought not to get so caught up in the day-to-day affairs of this that you’re not sitting back and being contemplative and thinking about, “How does this really fit with our world-and-life view? How is this authentically Christian? How is this authentically Reformed? How is this distinctive?”

Chris agreed but spoke honestly of the struggle a principal had doing this:

If my job is vision and direction setting I shouldn’t be – if I’m the captain of the ship and I’m responsible for vision, I should have my eye on the stars, I shouldn’t have my eye on swabbing the deck. Right? And yet, that’s the day-to-day life of the school and it’s hard to ignore that. You’ve got to find your place within that. But if I’m doing too much of that, that’s a problem.

Chris warned, “I think losing sight of vision, focus, direction for a board or administration is a threat” to authentic Christian education. Chris explained, “I think there is rigor and discipline to the idea of this is who we are, so we are going to do this and we’re not going to do that.” Chris had adopted a “habit of telling the story of (the school) in every conversation that I have; I need to keep coming back to the story of (the school), who we are, why do we exist, what are new ways of doing that?” In a similar vein, Jamie often invited teachers to reflect upon their own narrative:

[I ask,] “How did you get where you are?” and the journeys are all different, and we have to acknowledge that, but we are also at a point, we have to travel together, right? But each one of the people travelling has to have the motivation to reach a particular goal. So how do you again articulate that for yourself? So

that to me has always been a very powerful way of doing that, to think about the stories of us as individuals before God. There is a common narrative, but there is also an individual narrative.

In the busyness of the day-to-day happenings of a school, Jamie said, “I think principals, vice principals, they should be the people who would ask a so-called innocent question,” to bring the core commitments to the surface again. For Jamie, this “needs to be a natural conversation, and sometimes it could be more formal” with new teachers and with experienced teachers. The goal of these conversations was to encourage teachers to “not bury those core values, but to ask those 'Why?' questions again.”

The participants all spoke of the need to cultivate a school culture in harmony with the core commitments of the school community. To describe this, Chris linked the term “cohesiveness” with authenticity:

That’s where I say every policy, every procedure somehow has to be, there has to be cohesiveness with what you believe about education and about Christian education and that’s what makes it authentic. Right? If there is cohesion, there has to be a match; it has to make sense and so if you have – now it goes back to our idea of people solve problems. If you put policies or procedures in place that now shackle people, that they can’t solve problems together, you’ve got a problem. I think it’ll take away from your authenticity. So policies and procedures actually have to open that up; they have to open up the possibility of people being able to discourse with one another. And to do that in a real way.

Chris illustrated this statement by showing how a zero-tolerance policy did not contribute to an authentic Christian school culture because it shut down the possibility of conversation:

I suppose if I use the example from earlier, you know, zero tolerance in some ways closes the doors to conversation, you know; if a student makes a mistake, does the why of that mistake matter? Well, if it's zero tolerance it doesn't. I don't have to care anymore. It's just a formula; I need to be able to operate so I can converse with people, because the long view is, what are we going to do that's going to help that person be a better person down the road, how will they contribute to society, how will they interact with others; you know, what will be the truth point in their life, what will be the anchoring ideas in their life?

Chris was concerned that the policy restricted the relationship and did not allow any of the parties to reflect upon the big picture. Chris cautioned that policies and decisions that “come into place because of fears,” risk making the Christian school “too process oriented” or “too systematic.” Charlie demonstrated that policies could contribute positively to an authentic Christian school culture if they were crafted in a way that promoted the core values:

I do empower my staff (I hope they feel that they are), but I provide for them, I hope, the encouragement and the inspiration and the policies and procedures for them to empower themselves and to do their jobs well. Okay? My goal is that there is good education for children here at this school and that it's in harmony with our foundational documents.

For Chris, the policies and procedures needed to reflect the core belief that God, as the author of creation, has created each person:

I think that's going to come through in our beliefs, “Does what we do, our policies, our procedures, our practices, do they match what we believe?” And so, if I believe we are fearfully and wonderfully made, then as a Christian school,

what policies do we have around marks, homework, attendance, what is your school culture like? It should come through. Do we recognize that there's a place, how inclusive is your school, how diverse is your school? If we truly believe that all people are fearfully and wonderfully made, regardless of their own beliefs, you should see it in the very life of the school.

The participants showed that policies could contribute positively to school culture when they were crafted in harmony with the core values of the school.

The participants also pointed out that even something as mundane as weekly assemblies or bulletin boards could contribute to an authentic Christian school culture. There were also opportunities throughout the day and the week to reflect upon and rearticulate the core commitments of the school. Jamie emphasized that as a staff, "the whole notion of the core beliefs, that they are central to who we are," needed to be discussed, "not just formally in a meeting but also over a cup of coffee." Jamie used the illustration of a principal going into a classroom and commenting on a bulletin board as an opportunity to reflect on the "Why?" question:

Well, those bulletin boards are beautiful, like well-designed, colourful, but if I were to just walk in here, what tells me that this is actually a Christian school? You should be thinking about that a little bit more. So to take what we take for granted, again, should be articulated more fully.

At Chris' school, a weekly school-assembly was designed as a "town-hall meeting" for announcements and other business matters. But the assembly was also about asking the question, "What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?" and as a school, "How do we see that even in our world today?" Chris also had a habit of emphasizing the name "Christian" in the school's name, rather than omitting it. Other decisions that Chris

made, such as turning off the bells and eliminating late slips, contributed to a school culture that Chris believed reflects a respect for the students as human beings:

It's so easy for students to feel like school is like prison. It's not that you're trying to make it like prison. It's because we're just trying to do something good, but then we do it in some kind of control ways. Those are things we need to look at.

Chris summed it this way, "So you want the idea of authentic? The life of your school should reflect what you believe about people, about life."

The participants described some of the intentional efforts needed to ensure that the life of the school reflected the core commitments. In this regard, Jamie believed that a principal needed to act like a coach:

So in my work as principal I saw myself a bit as a coach, and I thought, "Well, there also has to be a very healthy Christian atmosphere among the teachers as colleagues." Right? So the interactions in the staffroom have to also mirror and echo the purpose of your school and your school community. Right? So if you walk closely with your God, how do your colleagues see that? You know. Your students should see that too.

Jamie observed that the students were also watching how the teachers lived and interacted, and learning, both positively and negatively, what it meant to live as a Christian in this world. Chris described it simply as "the way we live with one another." Christian perspective was not taught as a distinct unit, but students, "learn it in their courses through statements teachers make ... it will be blended in to anything and everything." During classroom visits Charlie observed that, "there is always an application," and teachers "are extending the conversation to at least have the students

think about this sort of thing.” In September, Jamie would lay out the following expectation to a class of Grade 2 students:

You know what? We’re going to learn a lot together, we’re going to have a lot of fun together, and we’re going to have a great year together, but one of the really big things in it all is, we want the Lord to be happy about what we do here together. Right?

Therefore, Jamie encouraged students to help one another and to be grateful when someone did help. Jamie celebrated these moments and described it as living “Christianly within the classroom.” As the year progressed, Jamie hoped to see growth so that at the end of the year it could be observed that, “Hey, this class actually moved from being a bunch of little individual and individualistic Grader 2’ers to a common group.”

Cultural Capital

While the participants acknowledged that authentic Christian education included a commitment component, and they hoped that students would gain religious capital, they were reluctant to treat these qualities the same way that they would treat knowledge and skills. At Chris’ school, “We’ve talked about should we have a profile of the graduate character.” Chris’ conclusion: “it doesn’t work for me.” Jamie’s illustration of a Grade 2 class showed that teachers looked for and encouraged qualities such as patience and gratitude throughout the school year. Jamie explained:

And I would agree that we should not leave that to the end of Grade 12 or the end of whatever, you know. We’re not working towards this goal and then, at that point you’d better have it, and whatever is before that, what happens before that doesn’t seem to matter too much. That would be an erroneous, I think, message to

send to our students. Right? It's a matter of growing and maturing and increasing in your faith and to see that on a daily basis in a sense.

The participants also described the difficulty with assessing these qualities because, as Jamie explained, "we cannot look into the hearts of our students." Charlie pointed out, "Some of that I don't know the immediate effect necessarily of that. It's hard to measure and it's not something that we particularly set out to measure." The participants also spoke about the challenge of keeping the commitment component in view. Chris explained:

Maybe a trap for high school education is that we become so focused and I think for our students so focused on university, college acceptance, and it's all about the marks, and we lose focus on it's all about the learning and it's not just about getting into university but about what kind of person are you going to be.

In this case, the focus was targeted on grades and acceptances at the expense of the developing person. "There has to be a purpose of what is the bigger story, you know, where does it go?" Charlie echoed these comments:

What is it that we are doing here at the school? Trying to keep that big picture alive; because we need a big picture to follow. We need to have something larger than our immediate concerns to drive us, and to inspire us, and to keep us going somewhere.

In summary, the participants showed that the commitment component was an important aspect to authentic Christian education but at the same time the religious capital that students gained was not something that they set out to measure.

Each of the participants identified certain qualities, abilities, and assurances that students gained as religious capital throughout their Christian school career. Charlie

spoke of young people today who are part of the postmodern generation and said, “I belong to the blank generation. I don’t belong to anything. I don’t identify with anything.” Charlie contrasted that reality with young people who are part of a particular Christian community that supported their Christian school:

That’s a fabulous religious capital, for kids to say, “I am not alone in this world, but I belong to my faithful Saviour, but also belong to this fabulous community here that cares about me, and it cares about me also by giving me a very good education – right? – So I know things, and I can do things, and I know where those things fit.

Jamie identified habits such as “the whole notion of compassion, of empathy, of helping each other, but also, learning how to resolve a dispute.” Jamie summarized, “They’re living Christianly.” Reflecting on what was written on a plaque that the Student Council had gifted to their principal, Chris said:

If they’re walking out doing things like that, what more can you ask? You know, because of the Spirit into their lives, they will continue to be leaders, right? They will just continue to be that way, because it’s who they are, it gets implanted into who they are.

Jamie expressed a hope that students would be able to reflect on how they had changed in their years of Christian schooling:

What has changed? Hopefully it’s in a positive sense but sometimes it can be a negative sense, or a negative can even be that you rearticulated your own thinking because of a particular instructor or professor, and you think, “Well, I know what I do not wish to do or wish to pursue.” It can be a nonexample in that sense, too.

The idea of developing an understanding of who you are, especially as a learner, was also a quality that Chris wished for students:

But also on the learning side of things, I would say, if every student walks out of this place with a keen understanding of who they are as people; that they know themselves better walking out than when they walked in, and what works for them, and how they operate as learners or as people. That's what I want for them.

This remark also reflected the conviction that Chris touched on a number of times that students were "all created to learn." Chris clarified, "all people are motivated to learn, they may not be motivated to learn all things, or they may have lost the sense of motivation through past experiences, but all people crave learning." Charlie echoed this sentiment and hoped that students would gain a desire to continue learning:

And the other capital I hope that we would give them is that education is a lifetime activity, that you're not finished when you've graduated here. I hope that I present myself and I hope that our teachers present themselves as people who are engaged in learning.

While none of these qualities and assurances were measured, Jamie believed that they were important for a student's life:

So can you measure that? I think that would be hard, but if you then at the end of your year or at the end of your whatever, your 8 years of the school, if that is the religious capital that they gain, then I would say they are clear to graduate, even though you can't measure it and you can't mark it, that their life as Christians is visible, first of all within their classroom, within the school, and that then eventually it will ripple out into society at large as well.

In describing the religious capital that they hoped students would gain, the participants enumerated a number of qualities of character that they hoped would equip students for their role in their social groups and society at large.

Having all served long careers in Christian education, the participants could look back and examine different viewpoints of how to prepare Christian young people to go out into the world around them. As part of the immigrant generation, Charlie reflected that they were “basically told that we were to avoid the culture around us.” Going to a public school and also attending a Christian church, Charlie lamented that “there was no interface at all,” and, therefore, “I was not a great witness in the public. . . . I just had to go and get my learning, and that had nothing to do with my walk as a Christian.” Moving ahead a couple of decades, Charlie recalled, “There came a time in the 70s and 80s where there were Christian pockets that were saying, ‘We really need to be engaged in the culture. We need to transform the culture.’” Chris recalled that this movement made it into Christian schools: “It’s all about transformation. Changing institutions, changing people’s lives, this is kingdom vision stuff, that’s what it’s all about. It’s all about change, changing people, transforming them.” Yet, looking back, one of the downsides of this approach to culture and to people was that, “in a sense, transformation always has to come down to, ‘You’re not good enough the way you are.’” Over time, Chris came to appreciate that “maybe it’s no longer about transformation but it’s about being a faithful presence.” Chris explained:

Faithful presence works for me, because now I can unconditionally love that person, and all I need to do is be a faithful presence in their lives. If there is going to be change, it’ll happen but my goal is not to change them; my goal is to be a

faithful presence. Notice the difference? Instead of, “I’m going to change you,”

I’m going to focus on what I can do which is to be a faithful presence.

There was an element of risk and a sense of unease at the acknowledgement that control was lost a bit. Chris admitted, “The only person I can control is myself.” Nevertheless, for Chris’ school, “I think that’s how we operate as a Christian school,” equipping students to be a faithful presence to the community and culture around them.

As the participants described recent challenges to Christian education, they also presented a model of how Christians prepare students to engage culture today. Charlie acknowledged that “there are those in some Christian schools who see Christian schools as a safe haven for protecting their children.” Admitting that there is “some legitimate purpose in education,” having a safe environment for children, Charlie warned, “to just retract from society is not biblically defensible, so we need to prepare children to live as we are placed in this world, and we need to live as citizens in this world.” Living as Christians in the midst of culture today may lead to confrontation. Citing the recent Supreme Court ruling in the case of the Loyola High School in Quebec or the challenges facing graduates of Trinity Western University’s law school, Charlie identified these examples as the “clash of two cultures,” otherwise known as the “age-old antithesis.” Here, too, Christian schools had responded in a way that was less than authentic. Charlie explained:

It’s something that authentic Christians will face all the time and, regrettably, some Christian schools no longer want to have that antithesis. They want to synthesize – right? And say, “Well, we’ll accept this, and we’ll accept that, and we’ll accept the next step, and we’ll accept the next step,” until you get to the

point where you say, “Wait a minute: This isn’t entirely in harmony anymore with what your original basis was. You’ve lost your authenticity.”

Closer to home, the participants demonstrated that authentic Christian schools did not isolate themselves from culture, nor did they compromise their standards. For example, each of the participants addressed the need to work with the expectations of the Ministry of Education of Ontario. Jamie explained that since they recognized the Ministry as “part of the government that God has put over us,” the implication was:

So then, we are also people of the land, people of the province – so let’s work with what we are given, but always keeping in mind the primary focus of our schools, of the end of education, or whatever you wish to call it ... let’s work with that curriculum, but let’s place all the topics within that curriculum within the larger context of who we are as Christians in this world.

In a similar manner, Chris referred to the recently released Health and Physical Education curriculum:

I think we have to be a bit more embracing and say, “What can we learn from that?” and “How do we think critically through those things?” It’s not necessarily all bad. You know, some of the stuff that comes from the Ministry of Education, just because it comes from the Ministry, doesn’t mean it’s evil. Right? The grace of God extends to all corners of the Earth.

In both cases, these principals demonstrated their conviction that God’s plan extends to all parts of the culture, including the Ministry of Education. The participants also showed that authentic Christian schools model for their students what it means to live and work in the midst of culture today.

Having equipped their students with religious capital, the participants described their expectation that Christians would authentically engage the culture. Charlie brought it back to the authorship of God in creation and the God-given cultural mandate:

We need to be legitimately engaged in culture. We need to be doing culture, making culture ourselves. I think that's true. I think for a time Christians thought that God had rescinded the cultural mandate, and He hasn't, and so I hope that in our education we are preparing children to say, "Now, as students, we are engaged in culture in what we're doing," not just as critics but as contributors, and hopefully that will be a longer association, a lifetime commitment to things.

Therefore, Jamie believed that authentic Christian schools were "not to form a separate-from-the-world kind of school community, but an alive-and-well within that setting, and yet a clearly Christian faith-based school." Chris summarized that for authentic Christian schools and their graduates: "I think the calling card is how do we truly be a blessing to the nations? Not just institutional, but how do our graduates be a blessing; because they are going to go into all kinds of different places." The participants showed their hope that authentic Christian education had prepared their students to be a faithful presence in today's world.

Chapter Summary

The core question placed before the participants of this study was: What is authentic Christian education? The participants expressed their understanding of the concept of authenticity as they answered this question. The data also revealed some common understandings of what it means to be authentically Christian. As the participants described their vision of what an authentic Christian school is and how it needs to be cultivated, they also identified cultural capital that students gain from an

authentic Christian education. While studies have been conducted, and books written about Christian education, this study intentionally used the concept of authenticity to examine Christian schools and their purpose. Through this lens, authentic Christian schools were found to be understood as communities in which the authentic Christian life is upheld as an attainable ideal and where a holistic approach to education aims to create an authentic response from its students. The contributions and implications arising from the use of authenticity as a lens for Christian education will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Christian schools have a history that extends over 50 years in Ontario, but in recent decades enrolment in these schools has declined and some schools have even closed. It has been suggested by some educators that with changes occurring in the culture, a loss of commitment to the vision of Christian education has contributed to this decline. At the same time, Christian education has encountered opposition in an increasingly secular society. Researchers have used the concept of authenticity to examine and describe changes occurring within society and within the field of education. However, this concept has not been used to examine the field of Christian education. Therefore, the study reported in this document sought to explore the concept of authenticity in Christian education. This chapter provides a summary of the study, a discussion of key findings, and a description of the implications arising from the results.

Summary of the Study

What is authentic Christian education? Each Christian school faces unique challenges from within, including the battle against the malaise of unauthentic Christian education. These schools also face challenges from without, especially in a growing secular culture. Therefore, a clear vision of what authentic Christian education means to each school forms a basis for the school to build upon and also serves as an apologetic for Christian schools in today's culture. To answer the core question of the study, three experienced Christian school principals participated in individual semistructured interviews.

The participants responded to an interview protocol that was divided into four sections: field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. In the first section, the participants were invited to describe their vision of authentic Christian education and to

describe the challenges that Christian schools in Ontario face today. The questions dealing with the habitus aimed at revealing the deeply rooted dispositions and assumptions that undergird authentic Christian education. The principals were then asked questions about the role of Christian school leaders in fostering authentic Christian education. The last section, cultural capital, focused attention on what the principals thought that students should gain from an authentic Christian education.

Data analysis distilled the interview material into big ideas that answered the core question: What is authentic Christian education? The thematic answers to this question were sorted into two parts. The first part, comprehending authenticity, presented the participants' interpretation of the concept of authenticity. The interviews revealed certain characteristics that the participants used to get at their understanding of authenticity. The interviews also produced certain key understandings of what authentic Christianity looks like even though each participant's personal faith narrative differed from the others. Bringing these two ideas together, the participants spoke about what they thought authentic Christian education is as well as what makes Christian education unauthentic. The second part answered the core question by looking at how an authentic Christian school could be cultivated. The participants gave their perspective on such matters as school leadership, community, school culture, and the cultural capital gained by students. The data provided a robust set of ideas related to authenticity in Christian education that contributes to the knowledge field and results in several implications.

Discussion

This study used the concept of authenticity to examine the field of Christian education in Ontario. A number of facets of authenticity were distilled from the data, each of which reveals another aspect of what Taylor (1991) refers to as the ethics of

authenticity. By applying this concept to the field of Christian education in Ontario, this study not only contributes a new perspective to the body of literature on authentic education but also addresses the “lacuna of the religions” (Grace, 2004, p. 48) in educational research. Through the interviews with Christian principals, the study develops a picture of the role of authentic Christian education in the development of the authentic Christian person, thereby contributing a new lens through which Christian schools can examine themselves, ward off unauthentic tendencies, and strengthen the Christian school enterprise.

As confessing Christians from different walks of the Christian faith, the participants were unified in their belief that God created all things and that this has implications for all areas of life. Therefore, for the participants, authenticity connotes the idea of genuine authorship, with God as the author of creation and with His authority inherent in His authorship. To this end, the participants spoke about God’s plan and noted that Christian education and Christian living must be in harmony with this plan. Although this aspect of authenticity has not received much attention in the literature, it is reminiscent of Taylor’s (1991) conclusion that “authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands” (p. 41). Acknowledging that God is the author of creation shaped the participants’ view of (a) students, (b) teachers, (c) the purpose of Christian education, and (d) the purpose of life.

The participants all addressed the ontological relatedness of the human person as a second facet of authenticity. Believing that each person was created relationally, the participants spoke of the duty to love God and love others. Students were encouraged to help one another and to be cognizant of their immediate relationship to God. Policies and practices were examined to ensure that relationships could be fostered rather than

ignored. This finding links to Reeves' (2012) explanation that since God is described in the Bible as "the triune God of love" eternally relating, then as people "made in the image of God, we are created to delight in harmonious relationship, to love God, to love each other" (p. 65). This perspective, that humans relate because God the author of creation relates, is uncommon in the literature. Nevertheless, the ontological relatedness of the human person is accepted within the literature. For example, Wheatley (2007) writes, "We humans have a great need for relationships and meaningful lives" (p. 103). Starratt (2007) similarly acknowledges that "our authenticity is ontologically relational" (p. 169). The participants viewed individualism as an affront to authenticity since it does not honour the relatedness for which we were created. Taylor (1991) describes this self-centeredness as a "slide in the culture of authenticity" resulting in "a radical anthropocentrism" (p. 58). In contrast, the participants' description of authenticity focused on the other and the nurturing of relationships.

Respecting the person as created by God, the participants also addressed autonomy as a facet of authenticity. This was evident as the participants described the relationship between the principal and the teachers within Christian schools. They expected teachers to be experts in education and they gave teachers space to try new things. The principals trusted the teachers to make responsible decisions that would benefit student learning. This finding aligns with Starratt's (2012) description of the ethical person as autonomous insofar as "they are independent agents" who do not "act out of a mindless routine" (p. 22), and it contrasts with Kumar and Mitchell's (2004) description of principals who distance themselves from their teaching staff, lose sight of who the teacher is as a person, and risk creating "automatons that carry out stipulated tasks" (p. 134). The principals in this study spoke of having high expectations for

teachers but also the need to support and encourage their colleagues through formal and informal supervision. This understanding illustrates what Starratt (2012) calls the “paradox of autonomy” (p. 24). Starratt (2012) explains that “one cannot be autonomous in isolation” but rather “in authentic relationships, others give us the courage to be ourselves” (p. 24). In authentic relationships, such as those described by the participants, the principal gives space to the teachers to be the responsible, autonomous persons they were created to be.

The participants identified reflection as a facet of authenticity that should be instilled in all the players involved in Christian education. The participants saw reflection as a means of keeping the core expectations in the foreground of all school activities. This emphasis corresponds with Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) who state that “reflection is currently a key concept in teacher education” (p. 47). Korthagen and Vasalos link reflection with autonomy by demonstrating that through reflection a frustrated student teacher becomes “aware of the fact that she has a choice” (p. 55), which “is one of the most fundamental factors in a person’s development, as it contributes to personal autonomy” (p. 55). Reflection was also identified in high-capacity learning community schools where Mitchell and Sackney (2009) observed teachers who had “engendered habits of inquiry, reflection, and lifelong learning” (p. 52). The participants valued reflection as a means of avoiding a run-of-the-mill approach to Christian education and thereby of ensuring authenticity.

The participants of the study were unanimous that excellence was another quality of authenticity. They viewed excellence as a hallmark of Christian education, a distinctive quality related to doing things well and honestly. They expected teachers to be experts at teaching and experts at learning, and they expected students to be excellent

learners, regardless of whether they were academically inclined or suited towards applied areas of study. Although the literature does not give much attention to excellence as a feature of authenticity, Starratt's (2012) description of what he calls the first level of transcendence does correspond. The first level of transcendence, "going beyond the ordinary ...striving for and achieving a level of excellence that exceeds anything one has ever done" (p. 30), resonates with the participants' emphasis on excellence. Against the backdrop of God's authorship in creation, striving to do things very well in service to God was a goal that the participants set before the students, teachers, and school community.

The participants explained that an authentic Christian education contributes to the formation of an authentic Christian person. Believing that God created each student and recognizing the author's imprint on each student produced a deep respect for the child. Viewing the students as adults-in-training, the participants acknowledged that authentic Christian education needs to move each student forward to become a better person. For the participants, this involves cultivating a greater awareness of who the student is in relation to God. Taylor (1991) captures the significance of this perspective when he says,

Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order *matters* crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. (p. 40)

The participants viewed teachers as one of the most significant adults in a student's life, directing student learning as students wrestle with who their authentic self is. This aligns with Palmer's (2007) statement that "Identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being

human” (p.14). A host of factors, including authentic Christian education, contributes to the formation of the student’s self.

As students learn about who they are in relation to things that matter crucially, authentic Christian education presents to them a distinct way of living. The participants saw this particularly as students observed Christian teachers and the way that they lived out their faith. The Christian life was also modelled in the seemingly innocuous activities that occur at a Christian school. These included regular assemblies that challenged students to consider what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in today’s world, and classroom expectations that encouraged students to please God. These observations align with Wolterstorff’s (2002) summary:

Christian education, to say it once more, is for Christian life, not just for Christian thought. The Christian life is an alternative mode of life. Consequently, Christian education will have to be an alternative mode of education, not just in the sense of communicating alternative thoughts but in the much more radical sense of equipping students for an alternative way of life. (p. 177)

The participants observed that in all of these ways, authentic Christian education is preparing students to live a Christian life today so that they can live a Christian life tomorrow. This is not unlike Starratt’s (2012) intent that ethical schools engage “young people in living by learning and learning by living in age appropriate ways what it means to live ethically in today’s world in order to live ethically in tomorrow’s world as responsible members” (p. 19). An authentic Christian education challenges each student in age-appropriate ways to live a Christian life.

The challenge to live the Christian life was also extended through the teaching of the academic curriculum. The participants did not view the religious component of

Christian education as something to be taught distinctly from history, math, art, or any other subject. Rather, the participants viewed authentic Christian education as a holistic approach that uses the academic curriculum to teach the whole child about Christian living. This corresponds with Starratt's (2012) approach to "embrace the academic curriculum as a primary carrier of moral development toward a moral identity" (p. 95). This finding stands in contrast to Green's (2012b) observations of Christian schools in England where she found that "the Bible wasn't relevant to the wider subject curriculum" and that "for the majority of students, it was thus marginal to their own cultural practice" (p. 18). The participants spoke about educating for head, hands, and heart, where the head is associated with knowledge, the hands with skills, and the heart with inclination or dispositions. Wolterstorff (2002) presents the same components:

If you agree with me that the school aims at life and not just thought, then the school cannot be concerned just with *knowledge*. Nor can it be concerned just with knowledge plus *abilities*. It has to be concerned with what the student does with his knowledge and abilities. It has to be concerned with how the child *acts*.
(p. 177)

Though students will gain knowledge and develop skills, the participants also emphasized that the way to use knowledge and skills was also important. The participants described it as part of an authentic response to learning whereby students become inclined to use the knowledge and skills in a positive way towards God and man. Here, too, the authentic learner is being challenged to be reflective and to dialogue with the new learning, placing it within a bigger picture. This finding contrasts with the image of students as "depositories" (Freire, 1970, p. 72) of knowledge, but aligns with Starratt's

(2012) approach to learning whereby students explore “their identity as members of the worlds of culture, nature and society” (p. 95).

On their quest to develop an autonomous identity, authentic Christian education equips students with cultural capital. Green (2012b) describes cultural capital as a resource that “can confer distinction upon an individual and therefore material advantage” (p. 12). The cultural capital identified in this study was relational in nature. The participants spoke about living Christianly within the classroom, experiencing and developing qualities such as empathy, compassion, caring, and gratitude. Another example of cultural capital gained by students of authentic Christian education is a sense of belonging. The participants drew attention to the community effort involved in Christian education. Students grow up knowing that they are part of a community that cares for their development. This finding is in contrast to Bloom’s (1987) lament that “we are social solitaires” (p. 118). In community, the child develops an autonomous identity. This serves to illustrate further Starratt’s (2012) notion of the paradox of autonomy: “One is autonomous, yet one’s autonomy is as a cultural being” (p. 27). The participants expressed their hope that the cultural capital gained by students would serve them well within the classroom and their school community as well as rippling out to the broader culture.

The participants were confident that an authentic Christian education prepares their students to contribute positively to culture. This view of their students as authentic Christian people is echoed in Starratt’s (2012) description of the “autonomous cultural agent” who “bears responsibility to it [culture]” (p. 27). The participants explained that throughout the history of Christian education, various views of how Christians should live within a secular culture have been promulgated. From isolating oneself from the

culture to transforming the culture, these views have impacted how Christian school educators shaped the next generation. In this study, the participants expressed their expectation that students of authentic Christian education would be equipped to engage culture by being an authentic Christian presence in today's culture. The participants rooted their expectation in the cultural mandate given by God to unfold and develop the creation. This perspective was also reflected in the findings of the Cardus Education Survey (2011) where Christian school graduates were shown to be "uniquely compliant, generous, outwardly-focused individuals who stabilize their communities by their uncommon commitment to their families, their churches and larger society" (p. 5). Equipped with knowledge, skills, and an inclination to respond to the cultural mandate, students and graduates have the potential to be a blessing to the culture.

A further contribution of this approach to authentic Christian education is that the whole Christian school enterprise should be aligned with the purpose of preparing children to live the Christian life. The participants spoke about how every policy, procedure, and program needs to reflect the Christian commitment of the school. Moreover, they believed that all of the players involved in the Christian school enterprise must share this commitment. For Christian schools in Ontario, this includes parents, teachers, administration, committee members, and the board of directors. The participants spoke about the need for such mundane things as bulletin boards, assemblies, and class trips to be in harmony with the school's Christian commitment. Wolterstorff (2002) agrees and summarizes: "Education for Christian praxis requires Christian praxis. If a school is to educate for Christian life, it will in its totality have to exhibit Christian life. The school as a whole is the educative agent" (p. 90). While all parties are implicated in this responsibility, the participants agreed that it necessarily falls to the

principals to hold this vision before the entire school community. The Christian school principal is positioned to reflect upon the organization as a whole to see to it that the vision is active and living. Starratt (2012) reflects these observations as he addresses “those professionals with primary responsibility to attend to the ethical character of the school” (p. 141). He says, “Cultivating an ethical school is an organic endeavor” such that the ethical character “should permeate the purpose and process of every element in the school” (p. 141).

In summary, the results of this study demonstrate that the vision of authentic Christian education includes five facets of authenticity: authorship, relatedness, autonomy, reflection, and excellence. The participants interacted with these features as they described the Christian education enterprise and as they spoke of the Christian life students were being equipped to live. In this regard, the participants spoke of the hope to instill lifelong learning in the hearts and minds of their students. They agreed that this value begins in school when students are introduced to the bigger story that inspires and drives us beyond our immediate concerns. This finding aligns with a vital need that Palmer (2007) declares every student has: “to be introduced to a world larger than their own experiences and egos, a world that expands their personal boundaries and enlarges their sense of community” (p. 122). For the participants, lifelong learning was an essential component in an authentic Christian life.

Implications

The intentional use of authenticity as a lens to examine Christian education has several practical implications for Christian schools in Ontario. This section identifies and describes these implications and then discusses how the findings have confirmed a previously existing theoretical model for social analysis. Another implication for theory

is an emergent conceptual framework drawn from the data. Consideration is also given to new research pathways that could be addressed to delve further into the topic of authenticity and Christian education.

Implications for Practice

In describing the field of Christian education in Ontario, it has been noted that within the past couple of decades, the number of Christian schools has plateaued and the number of students attending these schools has declined. While a number of causes have been attributed to this problem, the participants have pointed to Christian schools, and by implication their supporting communities, as having settled for Christian education that is less than authentic. By applying the concept of authenticity to Christian education, this study has contributed a lens through which Christian schools can examine their programs, policies, and practices. Five facets of authenticity were revealed in this study: authorship, relatedness, reflection, autonomy, and excellence. An implication of this study is that self-examination or school-examination would involve each of these facets of authenticity. These five facets give educators a specific set of concepts with which to apply the lens of authenticity to examine the whole school as the educative agent as well as each of the players involved in the Christian school enterprise.

Whether a community is embarking upon the steps to set up a new Christian school or whether a seasoned school is celebrating its 25th anniversary, authenticity becomes a useful tool to examine the deep structures of the organization. This study has shown that authentic Christian schools view God as the author of creation, who has revealed His plan in the Bible. The participants emphasized that the school's core expectations need to be in harmony with the author's plan. This has implications for Christian school communities that are pondering a new vision statement or are in the

process of reviewing their core expectations. For example, the participants in this study suggested that the cultural mandate functions as a rationale for Christian education and Christian living since it reflects the author's plan. Christian school communities that use the lens of authenticity to identify and examine the deep structures will need to distill those biblical concepts that form the core expectations for authentic Christian education.

These core expectations form the deep structures that come to expression in the surface structures of the school. Those who have been entrusted with symbolic power by the Christian school community ensure that the policies, procedures, and practices align with the community's core expectations. The participants have indicated that while the community expects the board of directors to protect these core values, it is the principal who ensures that the core expectations are alive and well in the day-to-day affairs of the school. An implication from this study is that reflection is a necessary activity that the school leaders engage in and promote. Schools are by definition very busy institutions, and the mundane activities tend to take precedence and proceed without much thought. Instilling a contemplative approach to leading a Christian school keeps the leaders, and by extension the school as a whole, rooted in the core expectations.

A further implication for Christian school leaders is the need to reflect upon and nurture the various relationships within the school. This study has shown that, over and against the isolation of individualism, authenticity honours the ontological relatedness of people. As Christians, the participants promoted the relationship that God has with those whom He has created. Against this backdrop, the participants viewed all other relationships as proceeding from a place of deep respect. This view has implications for how principals interact with and supervise their teachers. Principals cannot hide away in their offices but need to be seen as caring for, supporting, and respecting the teacher as a

person and a professional. Teachers can then reciprocate that respect and also show respect towards their students as God created. Policies that hinder relationships should be reviewed and recrafted in order to promote relationships and to show deep respect for the parties involved. Together all of these relationships form the culture of the school, and this study has shown that the school's culture should give expression to the core expectations of the Christian school.

Within the relationships of the school, authenticity also recognizes the need for autonomy. A practical implication from this study is that principals need to be given space by the board of directors, while teachers need to be given space by the principal. If these school leaders are always looking over their shoulder, they will always be second guessing themselves and they will not be the independent agents they were created to be. Since autonomy does not occur in isolation, this study has also shown that autonomy presupposes responsibility. In the context of authenticity, responsibility implies excellence. Teachers are expected to be experts of student learning and well-versed in the subject matter they are teaching. In a similar manner, as an expert in school leadership, the principal is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the community's core expectations are kept in the foreground of all activities within the school.

A final practical implication of authenticity pertains to the formation of the student's authentic self. This study has shown that authentic Christian education views the child in relation to the author of creation. The implication is that each child is created by God, whether academically inclined, exceptional, average, or troubled. As an adult-in-training, the whole child is educated: head, hands, and heart. As children grow, they wrestle with who they are in relation to God, to others, and to the world around them.

Authenticity requires that a sense of autonomy be fostered in children in age-appropriate ways as they come to see their responsibilities to be authentic individuals. An implication for students is that they will be challenged to have an authentic response to their learning. Therefore, an authentic Christian education will provide knowledge and teach skills, but, as this study has shown, it will also push students to reflect upon their role in the culture around them.

Implications for Theory

This study has confirmed that the conceptual framework proposed by Bourdieu is a useful framework for examining Christian education. Green (2012a) used Bourdieu's conceptual tools in her study of Christian schools in England and noted that "Bourdieu's social analysis assumes that being situated in culture regulates our assumptions, relationships, and values and reproduces them in our social practice" (p. 11). The interviews conducted in this study were framed around Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, habitus, symbolic power, and cultural capital. The area of field helped to situate the discussion of authenticity in Christian education in the midst of a secular culture in which the ideal of authenticity seems to have been lost. Questions surrounding the habitus of Christian schools helped to get at the deep structures, described as the core commitments that the participants felt contributed to authenticity in Christian education. Symbolic power focused the discussion on those people to whom the school community has given power in order to ensure that the core commitments function in the life of the school. The area of cultural capital gave the participants an opportunity to focus their discussion on the fruit of authentic Christian education especially as it impacts students' lives. Bourdieu's tools were an effective means to apply the lens of authenticity to explore how the culture regulates the assumptions, relationships, and values within Christian schools.

This study also contributes an emergent conceptual framework that can be used in the study of authenticity. Social analysis that is conducted through the lens of authenticity can make use of the five facets of authorship, relatedness, reflection, autonomy, and excellence, as developed in this study. Like Taylor's (1991) "horizons of significance" (p. 38), the facet of authorship points away from the self. Since "authenticity can't be defended in ways that collapse horizons of significance" (Taylor, 1991, p. 38), social analysis can look for ways in which the feature of authorship is present. Autonomy and relatedness are facets that complement each other. The autonomous person functions as an independent agent but does so within a culture of relatedness. Excellence is a facet of authenticity through which social analysis can look for evidence of those things that go beyond the ordinary. The researcher who employs authenticity as a lens can also look for evidence of reflection as an intentional habit. Together, the five facets that emerged from this study develop and expand the lens of authenticity.

Implications for Further Research

For this study, interviews were conducted with principals who represented Christian schools with different historical narratives serving different Christian communities. Nevertheless, focusing the dialog through the lens of authenticity revealed a number of common expectations for authentic Christian education. A new research question that follows could then be: How can authenticity, along with its five facets, function as a unifying model for a wide array of Christian schools? Within the province of Ontario, there are a number of networks of Christian schools that for the most part function independently. There are also Christian schools that are not part of any network, only occasionally associating with them. While Christian schools have different

historical narratives and different community expectations, measuring them against the five facets of authenticity might reveal commonalities. Moreover, authenticity could also equip these Christian schools with an apologetic for Christian education in an increasingly secular society. Authenticity has the potential of uniting Christian schools from across the province to support one another and strengthen them for service to their communities, and this potential should be tested in empirical studies.

This research paper has posited that the conceptual framework of authenticity emerging from this study could be used by Christian schools as a litmus test for authenticity. A new research question that follows from this could be: To what end can authenticity, along with its five facets, be used by Christian schools? One area for analysis is teacher preparation. A common concern raised by preservice and inservice Christian school teachers is, “How do we teach this subject Christianly?” The lens of authenticity could be used by teachers to examine their teaching strategies, learning expectations, and assessment tools. Moreover, authenticity may also be useful as teachers develop or revisit their personal philosophy of Christian education that governs their calling. As this study has suggested, the five facets of authenticity could also be used to examine deep structures, like guiding principles and core expectations, as well as surface structures, like policies, programs, and practices. Further research would explore the utility of the emergent conceptual framework of authenticity in each of these areas.

This study has shown that Christian school principals play a key role in cultivating an authentic Christian school. As this study has shown, principals occupy a unique position within the Christian school community. On the one hand, they are regarded as experts in Christian education, leaders in their school communities, esteemed for the office they occupy. On the other hand, they find themselves responsible to the

board of directors, a group of men and women elected to represent the school community. A research question that follows from this could be: How do Christian school principals cultivate authentic Christian schools from the space between? Models of school management differ within Christian schools in Ontario. Further research could explore which management model best serves the goal of authentic Christian education.

Christian schools in Ontario continue to be able to offer an authentic Christian education in the midst of a secular society. Although this study has presented examples of opposition levelled against Christian education, Christian schools in Ontario continue to be protected by the law. This study has also shown that Christian educators have held different views of how Christian schools should be preparing their students to play a role in a secular society. Further research could explore the Christian-secular relationship in education. Again, authenticity could serve as the lens through which this relationship is explored. A research question that could serve as a catalyst could be: How can authenticity mediate the Christian-secular relationship in education? This study has contributed to the research on authenticity and education. In the light of authenticity, Christian schools may show that they, too, are delivering an authentic education that prepares graduates to contribute in a positive way to society.

This study has presented the participants' view of the students whom Christian schools serve. The data provided by the participants have shown that Christian education contributes to the development of the authentic Christian person. An implication for future research would be to look more deeply at the conceptual framework of authenticity in relation to the child. Children are often reduced to their category as a student. Yet, as this study has shown, children are far more complex, and each child is unique. It follows that a research question could be: How can authenticity develop a richer portrait of the

child? For Christian school educators, this portrait fits into the purpose and process of authentic Christian education. A greater appreciation of who this authentic person is would compel Christian school educators to strive to serve them to the best of their ability.

Conclusion

More than 50 years ago, in the aftermath of World War II, many Christian immigrants came to Canada looking for an opportunity to start a new life. These immigrants, many of whom originated from the Netherlands, started out with very little and, yet, as a Christian community, they were determined to establish Christian schools. This determination, undertaken at great personal sacrifice, was borne out of a conviction that a new life for their children necessarily included an education that was in harmony with the religious teaching of the home and church. Cultural life in Ontario has changed remarkably since those settlers established Christian schools. While some of these Christian schools have been able to mark their 50th anniversary, others have closed. Today, Christian school communities struggle to maintain a distinct identity in the midst of a secular culture.

This study has brought the ideal of authenticity into focus in examining what authentic Christian education is. The results of this study reveal five facets of authenticity: authorship, relatedness, autonomy, reflection, and excellence. Each of these facets has been shown to illuminate aspects of Christian education. These facets function together as an interrelated set of concepts that can be used to expose unauthentic tendencies and, at the same time, to revitalize the Christian school's core expectations. This study has shown that an authentic Christian education strives to equip children to live an authentic Christian life as autonomous persons, living in community, reflecting on

their place in the world that the author of life created, striving for excellence. This is the new life that the authentic Christian school community holds out for their children today.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Purpose: To explore authenticity in Christian education.

Authenticity recognizes that humans are relational beings and that “only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial.”

Authentic education has been described as embracing the academic curriculum as a primary means of involving learners in exploring their identity as members of the worlds of culture, nature and society.

Field: The dimensions of the social space.

Empirical Question: What constitutes authentic Christian education?

Questions:

1. Could you please give a brief description of your career in Christian education?
2. Could you describe your vision for Christian education?
3. What makes Christian *education* authentic? What makes *Christian* education authentic?
4. What are some of the challenges authentic Christian education faces from within? without?

Habitus: The deeply rooted dispositions and assumptions held by those in the field.

Empirical Question: What are the pillars of authentic Christian education?

Questions:

1. How do the core beliefs come to expression in the day to day discourse with staff and students? (i.e. *secular vs. religious*)
2. How do the core beliefs impact the organizational structure and operation of the school? (i.e. *managed vs. living system*)
3. To a stranger would you describe your school this way: “At _____ Christian school we teach/learn from a Christian perspective?” (i.e. *cognitive vs. affective*)

Symbolic power: Power to validate and control the accumulation of cultural capital.

Empirical Question: How do the school leaders foster authentic Christian education?

Questions:

1. How does the board of directors exercise its power? for what purpose?
2. How do you exercise your power in relation to your staff? (i.e. *power over vs. power to*)
3. Do you see yourself as a prophet – reminding the community of the source of its identity as a learning community and calling them to service within the community?

Cultural capital: Cultural tastes, art, music, religion are forms of economic capital.

Empirical Question: How does authentic Christian education equip students for their role within their social groups and society at large?

Questions:

1. What kind of religious capital do students gain at this school?
2. How do students gain religious capital?
3. What would you identify as key graduate expectations for each of your students?

Appendix B

Descriptive Codes

Field	Habitus	Symbolic Power	Cultural Capital
<i>Dimensions of the social space</i>	<i>Dispositions and assumptions</i>	<i>Power to validate and control</i>	<i>Access to beneficial social relations</i>
- relational	- cohesive	- serving capacity	- application
- good quality	- equip	- professionalism	- culture
- cultural mandate	- living	- gatekeeper	- relationships
- God is creator	- dynamic	- shepherd	- community
- commitment	- autonomy	- prophet	- lifelong learning
- core ideas	- space	- individual	- engaged
- harmony	- intrinsic	- narrative	- leaders
- head, hands, heart	- living together	- common narrative	- knowing themselves
- standards	- control	- protect & promote	- followers of Jesus
- structures	- blended	- living vision	- ritual habits
- growing	- teacher-student	- integrated	- gratitude
- respect	- rearticulate purpose	- consistent	- teachers care
- experts	- Trinity	- high expectations	- faithful presence
- match beliefs	- seamless whole	- reflective	- can't tease apart
- high expectations	- vision	- big picture	- role models
- support	- intentional	- leadership	- change
- thinking critically	- head, hands, heart	- discourse	- growth
- vision	- truth	- gratitude	- living Christianly
- natural learners	- Christ-centered	- speaking truth	- Christian culture
- reflective	- cognitive	- blessing	- individualistic to common
- God created	- authority	- risk	- ripple effect
- God focused	- God's plan		
- ethos			
- interwoven			
- core			
- excellence			
- leadership			
- creative tension			